

Opposition, comparison, and associativity: On Luis J. Prieto as a reader of the *Cours de linguistique générale*

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Abstract. This paper aims to show the role played by the relations of comparison and associativity, as they are introduced in Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*, in the theories of Luis J. Prieto. This is done, first, on the basis of a historiographical approach, and second, on the basis of an exegetical approach to Prieto's works. Thus, the paper first presents and analyses three programmes, corresponding to three courses Prieto gave at the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba* during the early 1950s. The analysis of these programmes will show the centrality of Saussure's *Cours* in Prieto's linguistic theorizing. After this, an attempt will be made to show the continuity between the theoretical tenets presupposed by the courses' programmes and the main proposal advanced in Prieto's article "*Classe et concept. Sur la pertinence et sur les rapports saussuriens 'de comparaison' et 'd'échange'*". By constructing this continuity we attempt to show: (1) the constant influence the *Cours* exerted upon Prieto's thinking throughout his whole career, and (2) that such influence is manifested in the fact that Prieto did not generalize linguistic principles as such, but rather posited that linguistic principles were instances of more general semiotic ones.

Keywords: history of semiotics; history of linguistics; structuralism; general semiotics; epistemology

Introduction

The immediate aim of this paper is to show the role of Ferdinand de Saussure's relations of associativity (*rappports associatifs*) and relations of comparison (*rappports de comparaison*) as they were presented in the *Cours de linguistique générale*,² in the

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² Thus, this article will only concentrate on the text of the *Cours* and will not treat the notions of 'comparison' or 'associativity' in other Saussurean texts. The reason for this is simple: Prieto's

theories of Luis Jorge Prieto. The main theses I will advance in the article are the following: (1) there exists a continuity between Prieto's early work on linguistics and his later work in (general) semiotics; (2) this continuity is dependent upon the fact that for Prieto, from very early on, the linguistic phenomenon was nothing but a special case of broader *semiotic* phenomena; (3) it is this inclusion of the linguistic within the semiotic that allowed him to formulate his 'epistemological' (which I will label 'cognitive' instead) interpretation of the linguistic theories with which he was working, and it was this interpretation that ultimately led him to elaborate a special kind of general semiotics. Presenting evidence backing up claims (2) and (3) will hopefully allow the reader to acknowledge the importance of Saussure's thinking for Prieto, for indeed, the theoretical position of Prieto to a large extent derives from conceiving linguistics as a part of 'semiology'.

In order to show the validity of the thesis, this paper first presents and comments on the programmes for three courses Prieto gave at the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba* (Argentina) from 1953 to 1954. Thereafter, the programmes of these courses are examined in the light of the academic articles Prieto published during those years (for this purpose mainly Prieto 1953; 1954a; 1954b, and to some extent also Prieto 1958a; 1958b; 1960 are used). In doing so, the focus will be on the following notions: opposition, contrast, articulation, proportion and arbitrariness. For the purposes of the discussion, the definitions for these notions are mainly drawn from Prieto 1954a and 1954b due to the fact that these texts were written by Prieto in parallel with, or as preparation for, teaching the courses examined in the upcoming sections.³

'Opposition' means the relationship between all the elements that can appear in a given position, or in the same context, within a compound object. For instance, to the extent that Spanish /b/ and /p/ can both appear at the onset of the first syllable of a Spanish word, although certainly not at the same time (i.e. in Hjelmslevian terms, it is *either* /b/ *or* /p/ which appears at the beginning of a syllable), we can say that, within the Spanish phonological system, /b/ and /p/ are opposed to each other.

writings virtually never refer to any other text by Saussure but the *Cours*. In a note published in the *Journal de Genève* on 27 January 1995, in relation to his leaving the Chair of General Linguistics at the University of Geneva, Prieto is quoted saying that he considered himself "*saussurien que dans la mesure où il s'occupe de la problématique posée par Ferdinand de Saussure*".

³ This is important, for all these notions are not originally Prieto's, and they were often used by linguists who interpreted Saussure in a functionalist key, for instance André Martinet (with whom Prieto studied from 1956 to 1960) or Eric Buyssens. However, as we will see, Prieto would sometimes change just enough in a definition to render it his "own" definition of a term; therefore, it seems safer to define these notions as they are present in his own works, inasmuch as we are interested in Prieto's thinking.

What is meant by ‘contrast’ is the relationship between the elements of a compound object. It is precisely a relationship of contrast that will determine the functionality of a position. In the Spanish syllable /pa/, the phonemes /p/ and /a/ contrast with each other (in Hjelmslevian terms, *both /p/ and /a/ appear as making up the given compound object that is the syllable /pa/*), and their contrast is given by the fact that they take different functions within the syllable.

It is important to note that these two definitions are taken directly from Prieto’s works, but they are not exclusive to Prieto. Actually, this way of understanding ‘opposition’ and ‘contrast’ is shared by most of the functional linguists in the French tradition, beginning with André Martinet (see Akamatsu 2008: 138–139 who even refers to a “Paris school”).

Opposition and contrast will be central in understanding the continuity between the early linguistic works of Prieto and his late semiotic thinking. Prieto’s first articles were devoted to phonology and they dealt extensively with the syllabic structure, especially in order to draw conclusions about “phonological syntax”. Prieto’s main stance regarding syllabic structure is that for every phonological system there are partial systems corresponding to the functional positions within the syllable. He thus distinguishes, first, simply between a central position (the syllabic nucleus) and a non-central position (either onset or coda).⁴ In Prieto 1954b: 54 we can thus read the following:

Nous appellerons les particularités phoniques qui distinguent les phonèmes centraux des phonèmes non-centraux “traits pertinents contrastifs”, et les particularités phoniques qui distinguent entre eux les phonèmes centraux d’une part, les phonèmes non-centraux d’autre part, “traits oppositionnels”.

We shall call “contrastive distinctive features” the phonic particularities which distinguish central from non-central phonemes, and “oppositional features” the phonic particularities which distinguish both the central phonemes from one another, and the non-central phonemes from one another.⁵

Opposition is then the relationship differentiating between the same (functional) type of phonemes, while contrast distinguishes between the functional position of each type of phonemes. Prieto 1954b posits that there are oppositional features and contrastive features, meaning that, in 1954, Prieto saw features as existing in two

⁴ In his doctoral thesis, the non-central positions, onset or coda, are called positions of maximum and minimal differentiation respectively (given that, in Spanish, many phonological oppositions existing in onset are neutralized in coda: see Prieto 1953: 6, 8, 14, 42. Chávez Barreto 2021 includes an overview of the Spanish consonant system in both positions as described by Prieto 1953).

⁵ Translations into English are by the author of the article unless indicated otherwise.

dimensions, so to speak: some features belonged to the paradigmatic definition of a given linguistic unit (oppositional features), and some features belonged to its syntagmatic definition (contrastive features). Later on, Prieto would abandon this view, opting instead for conceiving the feature as exhibiting both an oppositional and a contrastive aspect (see Prieto 1977[1975]: 51). This proposal is fully reworked and explained in Prieto 1988. Briefly stated, the proposal is the following: to the extent that the contrastive aspect of a feature defines a functional position, this aspect can be taken as referring to a “dimension” of an object. Whatever a given object manifests in a given dimension will constitute the oppositional aspect of a feature (Prieto 1988: 29–30). These two aspects come together to form a feature.

Let us take the French sentence *‘j’ai mal à la tête’* (‘I have a headache’) as an example. A feature of such a sentence would thus be ‘(subject) *je*’.⁶ The dimension, i.e. the contrastive aspect is the functional position ‘(subject)’, the oppositional aspect is ‘*je*’ as this is what the sentence actually manifests in a given dimension (naturally, ‘*je*’ would thus be in opposition with all the other elements that can appear in the same dimension). The treatment of the notion of feature that begins in Prieto 1988 is continued in Prieto 1990; towards the end of the article I will discuss his later work, for it is there that the continuity between early linguistic problems and later semiotic problems in the work of Prieto comes to light.

The next three terms ought to be presented and defined together, inasmuch as they can be thought of as different aspects of the same phenomenon. Let us begin with ‘articulation.’ Prieto (1954a: 136) writes:

Les signes de la langue, en effet, sont des signes articulés. Cela veut dire qu’avec des signes en nombre limité, la langue est en état de former, en les combinant, un nombre indéfiniment plus grand de nouveaux signes, applicables aux situations les plus variées.
[Original emphasis, I. C.]

The signs of a *langue*, indeed are *articulated signs*. This means that with a limited number of signs a *langue* is able, by combining them, to form an indefinitely greater number of new signs, applicable to the most varied situations.

However, he immediately notices that this is simply one of the two articulations exhibited by the type of sign system a *langue* is. Thus he adds (Prieto 1954a: 137):

On sait qu’il y a dans la langue une autre articulation. En effet, la face signifiante [...] des signes non articulés [...] est, elle aussi, articulée, c’est-à-dire qu’à son tour elle est une combinaison d’éléments qui peuvent, en se combinant différemment, former le signifiant d’un autre signe.

⁶ This notation is the one proposed by Prieto since Prieto 1964, and used extensively in Prieto 1988.

We know that in *langue* there is another articulation. In effect, the signifier face [...] of non-articulated signs [...] is itself articulated, that is to say, it is, in its turn, a combination of elements which can, by being combined differently, form the signifier of another sign.

It is worth noticing that this definition of (double) articulation is, at least in Prieto 1954a, practically identical with that of Martinet (indeed, Prieto even uses the famous phrase '*j'ai un horrible mal de tête*' as an example, just as Martinet does in his own paper on double articulation, see Martinet 1949: 33). Yet, as concerns the first articulation, Prieto points out that he would call it "*l'articulation du signe*", instead of using Martinet's label "*articulation linguistique sur le plan du contenu*" (Prieto 1954a: 137).⁷

Articulation, understood in this sense, is due to the fact that signs partake of proportions. Prieto (1954a: 138) states:

Les signes de la langue sont articulés, c'est-à-dire analysables en des signes plus petits, pour autant qu'ils sont capables de figurer dans des rapports proportionnels. Si l'on peut dégager dans le signe /la tabl/ "*la table*" deux signes, /la/ et /tabl/, c'est seulement parce que ce signe est en rapport proportionnel avec, disons, /yn tabl/, ce qui ressort de la comparaison avec /la šez/ – /yn šez/, etc. [Original emphasis, I. C.]

The signs of a langue are articulated, in other words, they are analysable into smaller signs, inasmuch as they are capable of being introduced in proportional relations. If in the sign /la tabl/ la table 'the table' we can detach two signs, /la/ and /tabl/, it is only because this sign is in a proportional relationship with, let's say, /yn tabl/ une table 'a table', which emerges from the comparison with /la šez/ la chaise 'the chair' – /yn šez/ une chaise 'a chair', etc.

The idea of proportionality is introduced in Prieto 1954a in relation to Jean Cantineau's seminal article on *oppositions significatives* ('meaningful oppositions'). An '*opposition significative*' for Cantineau is defined as "*celle que forment deux signes de la langue dont les signifiants sont différents*" ('that which is formed by two signs of the language which have different signifiers'; Cantineau 1951: 16). Prieto notes, both in this text and in several other places, that the problem with Cantineau's approach is that *opposition* is a relation held between one-faced entities

⁷ Prieto 1966 offers a typology of codes based on the degrees of articulation: codes with no articulation, with double articulation, with only first articulation, with only second articulation, and with partial articulations. However, in Prieto 1966 and in later texts, the question of articulation is treated by Prieto through the logic of classes (or set theory), and thus it has to do with the way in which the classes (in the expression and in the content plane) at the interior of a code (= sign system in this context) relate to each other.

(e.g. phonemes in Trubetzkoy's case), and they are thus not generalizable to the sign as a whole. Up until the mid-1960s, this problem will occupy much of Prieto's theoretical concerns as he will try to develop a way to study the content plane as consisting of one-faced entities. However, this article will not deal with that side of his research, i.e. the elaboration of Prieto's semantic theory.

In direct connection to proportionality and articulation comes the question of arbitrariness. In the same text we have been dealing with, Prieto states that "*Seuls les signes minimaux sont arbitraires. Le signe articulé est relativement motivé*" ('Only minimal signs are arbitrary. The articulated sign is relatively motivated'; Prieto 1954a: 141; original emphasis, I. C.), and he quotes Saussure's *Cours* as the source of this statement.⁸ Prieto does not give an explicit definition of 'arbitrariness', but he does state (Prieto 1954a: 134) that

Ces deux substances sont, quant à leur nature, indépendante de la relation de signification qui les unit, et se présentent l'une vis-à-vis de l'autre comme deux continua. Par conséquent, pour qu'une telle relation puisse s'établir, il est nécessaire que les deux substances qui en sont les termes soient soumises à une organisation préalable.

These two substances [the phonic substance of expression and the psychic substance of content, I. C.] are, regarding their nature, independent from the relation of signification that bonds them together, and they appear *vis-à-vis* one another as two *continua*. Thus, in order to establish relation of signification, it is necessary for the two substances that are the terms of such relations to be subjected to a *priori* organization.

This forces Prieto to distinguish three factors in the analysis of sign systems: the organization of the substance of expression, the organization of the substance of content and the relation of signification that brings them together. Since the relationship is arbitrary, i.e. there is nothing in the substances themselves that relates them in a given way, the mechanism of the *langue* must then work "against" such arbitrariness (i.e. the systematicity of language consists, precisely, in limiting the arbitrary, cf. Joseph 2015: 98 and the first of Saussure's quotes therein). In this sense, minimal signs can be said to be absolutely arbitrary, while "larger" signs (as they are articulated and partake of proportions) are relatively arbitrary.⁹ The

⁸ The quoted passage is from the third section, "*L'arbitraire absolu et l'arbitraire relatif*" of the chapter "*Mécanisme de la langue*": "*Une partie seulement des signes est absolument arbitraire; chez d'autres intervient un phénomène qui permet de reconnaître des degrés dans l'arbitraire sans le supprimer: le signe peut être relativement motivé*" (Saussure 1995[1916]: 181).

⁹ The famous example appearing in the *Cours* to illustrate absolute and relative arbitrariness is that of '*vingt*' ('twenty') versus '*dix-neuf*' ('nineteen'). While '*vingt*' is completely arbitrary,

first articulation, or the articulation of signs, would thus be, in this way, precisely a manner of limiting arbitrariness.¹⁰

In the following, we will try to show that the way in which these notions are interrelated in Prieto's early work is directly connected to the treatment of the problems, and their solutions, from which Prieto's later general semiotics would emerge. Therefore, the last section of the text will put together the theoretical linguistic claims of early Prieto with the theoretical semiotic claims of late Prieto. That part of the work mainly refers to his 1990 article "*Classe et concept. Sur la pertinence et sur les rapports saussuriens 'de comparaison' et 'd'échange'*" (Prieto 1990).

This article attempts to allow the reader to appreciate the continuity of Prieto's thinking, and above all, that his generalization of some principles of linguistic theory was not "glottocentric" at all. For him, the set of all properly linguistic phenomena did not include the set of all semiotic facts; instead, the set of linguistic phenomena was included in the set of semiotic facts; thus he tried to find the general rules underlying a particular case. For Prieto, it is not so much that every semiotic structure functions like a *langue*, but rather that inasmuch a *langue* is a semiotic structure it exhibits some properties that are common to every semiotic structure.¹¹

Prieto's early work on linguistics

Luis J. Prieto taught in Geneva from 1969 until his death in 1996. There he was the last holder of Saussure's chair in General Linguistics. Prieto is, therefore, sometimes considered as a member of the Geneva School of Linguistics and his work has been read as fitting into the general theoretical and descriptive inclinations of the school

'*dix-neuf* is only relatively arbitrary for "*il évoque les termes dont il se compose et d'autres qui lui sont associés [...]*" (Saussure 1995[1916]: 181).

¹⁰ It seems that this view on articulation might not be too far from the second of its definitions found in the *Cours*. Here is the relevant passage: "[...] *l'articulation peut désigner ou bien la subdivision de la chaîne parlée en syllabes ou bien la subdivision de la chaîne des significations en unités significatives [...]*" (Saussure 1995[1916]: 26).

¹¹ This was already hinted at by Prieto in his article "*La sémiologie*", which was ready in 1963, but due to editorial constraints was published only in 1968. In *Principes de noologie*, published in 1964, although again finished earlier, he already refers to "*La sémiologie*" (Prieto 1964: 13, n. 3). An even clearer formulation of this principle, and of Prieto's semiology at that time, is found in *Messages et signaux* (Prieto 1966: 1–6) published in 1966. However, the text in which this idea appears as a proper axis around which a semiotic theory (which includes a linguistic theory) is built was undoubtedly *Pertinence et pratique*, published in 1975. This is the reason, it seems to me, that he often begins the exposition of his semiological theory, at least during the 1960s and 1970s, with some considerations about *indices*.

(cf. L. de Saussure 2006: 24). Prieto, however, never spoke of himself as being a member of the School as such, but he did identify his works with, and adhered to, Saussurean linguistics, although in his own non-orthodox way, and to Saussurean and, even more specifically, Prague structuralism.

The relationship of Prieto to Saussure is central for understanding the former's theorizing. This was the case from the early stages of Prieto's linguistic theory. Indeed, even if we approach the relation between the two linguists from an extrinsic point of view, that is to say, from something similar to what Konrad Koerner has termed "climate of opinion",¹² the very beginning of Prieto's career was definitely marked by the dawn of Saussurean linguistics. In 1947 he enrolled in the recently created Doctorate in Humanities programme at the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*. The programme included philology, and linguistics, as a field of specialization (see Vallejos 2015: 5; the programme consisted of a B.A. and a PhD, the difference between them being that the PhD required a thesis for graduating). During these times, structural linguistics was strong in Argentina, especially because of the recent presence (until 1946) and influence of the Spanish linguist and philologist Amado Alonso at the Buenos Aires Institute of Philology. Alonso was instrumental in the development of Argentinean linguistics (see Barrenechea 1996; Giammateo, Albano 2007), and, moreover, it was he who, in 1945, translated the *Cours de linguistique generale* into Spanish – a translation published for the first time in Argentina. Ana Maria Barrenechea writes that during Alonso's period as head of the Institute of Philology "[c]onocíamos la obra de los formalistas rusos que habían emigrado a Praga y empezaban a constituir la avanzada del estructuralismo lingüístico sincrónico y diacrónico (Trubetzkoy y Jakobson), unidos al checho Mukarovský" ('we knew the work of the Russian Formalists who had emigrated to Prague and began to build an outpost of synchronic and diachronic linguistic structuralism [Trubetzkoy and Jakobson], together with the Czech Mukařovský'; Barrenechea 1996: 99).¹³

Although Prieto studied in Córdoba, it was via Alonso's translation that he first read Saussure (Redard 1991: 4) and, most likely, it was also the enduring indirect influence of Alonso in Córdoba's academic atmosphere that allowed Prieto to be

¹² Koerner used this term already in his seminal work about Saussure (Koerner 1973: iv). Patrick Sériot (2020: 254, n. 2) rightly notices that the term goes back to Carl Becker's *The Heavenly City of Eighteenth Century Philosophers*. In that book, however, Becker introduces the term by saying that it was Alfred North Whitehead who had "recently restored [it] to circulation" (Becker 1991[1932]: 5).

¹³ While in Buenos Aires, Alonso also translated and wrote an important prologue for another work of another key figure of the Geneva school: Charles Bally's *Le langage et la vie*. Prieto and Alonso did not meet personally, at least not in Buenos Aires, since Alonso left Argentina in 1946.

familiarized, from very early on, with the works of Nikolai Trubetzkoy and the Prague linguists.¹⁴ It is important to notice, though, that he quickly came in touch with the French original edition of the *Cours* as can be proved by the syllabuses of three courses he gave at the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities in Córdoba in the early 1950s. The first of the courses was given by Prieto in June of 1953,¹⁵ and it was under the topic “Phonology and Phonetics”; the second course was given in August of 1954,¹⁶ the topic, although not stated as such in the document itself, was phonology and general linguistics. The third course was a course in linguistics, and it corresponds to his teaching activities of the academic year of 1954.¹⁷ In order to avoid confusion, we will refer to the course from August 1954 as to ‘course A from 1954’, and to the course in linguistics as to ‘course B from 1954’.

Prieto’s three courses on phonology and general linguistics

All of the three courses begin by introducing the distinction between *langue* and *parole* (in Spanish, *lengua* and *habla*¹⁸) from three points of views: Saussure, Louis Hjelmslev and Trubetzkoy. After this introduction, the phonology course from

¹⁴ Indeed, the arrival of Alonso in Buenos Aires in 1927 marked the beginning of an epoch in Argentinean linguistics strongly marked by what will be later known as structural linguistics. According to Mabel Giammateo and Hilda Albano (Giammateo, Albano 2007: 114), the influence of structural linguistics was even visible in the teaching programmes outside university, i.e. at elementary school level.

¹⁵ The exact dates for this course were 8, 9, 10, 15, 16 and 17 June 1953.

¹⁶ The exact dates for this course were 16, 18, 19, 23, 25, and 26 August 1954.

¹⁷ We do not possess enough information to determine the dates of this course. All the available information concerning these courses is held at the Prieto archive of the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities of the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*. These are the only programmes available at the archives in Córdoba, and they correspond to the first period of Prieto at Córdoba University, which goes from 1947 to 1956, and which includes his years as student (1947–1951 for his B.A., and 1951–1955 for his PhD, although his thesis was finished in 1953) and as teaching assistant. From our work in the archive we know that Prieto gave the courses as part of the regular courses on Classical and Romance Linguistics (orig. ‘*Cátedra de Lingüística Clásica y Romance*’), as he was a teaching assistant to the Professor in charge of those courses. The programme for the lecture on Linguistics probably belongs to the course on linguistics (orig. ‘*Cátedra de Lingüística*’) that was taught at the Superior School of Modern and Classical Languages at the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*. Unfortunately, the programmes for the lectures of his second period at Córdoba, from 1960 to 1966, when he was researcher and professor, are not available at the archives, but it is possible to consult his research reports from 1963 to 1965.

¹⁸ On the issues related to the translation of these terms into Spanish see De Mauro 1995: 423–424, n. 68.

1953 deals with topics of theoretical and Spanish phonology, which is explainable from the fact that Prieto was working on his doctoral thesis, *Fonología del español moderno*, during this year. Course A from 1954 adds more theoretical depth. In this course, after discussing *langue* and *parole*, Prieto moved on to analyse André Martinet's "conditions to consider a system of signs as a *langue*".¹⁹ From here follows an analysis of articulation and arbitrariness. A small detour is then made to consider the matter of expression, and this serves as a platform for dealing with some theoretical aspects of phonology, and discussing the distinction between phonetics and phonology, again following Saussure, Hjelmslev and Trubetzkoy. Afterwards Prieto returns to the topic of articulation but this time connecting it to those of economy, arbitrariness and proportionality of signs; the treatment of these topics is framed by the Saussurean notions of absolute and relative arbitrariness, and by the Hjelmslevian concept of *plerology*.²⁰ The rest of the course analyses Saussure's work in relation to the Neogrammarians, and then it tackles the problem of Argentinean Spanish linguistics.²¹

The programme for Course B from 1954 follows more or less the same structure, but, from the perspective of the researchers into the history of semiotics and linguistics, it has the advantage of including the bibliography of the works Prieto required the students to read. The programme opens with the distinction between *langue* and *parole*. The texts to be read are Saussure's *Cours* (the 1949 French edition), Trubetzkoy's *Grundzüge der Phonologie* (in German), Hjelmslev's "*Langue et parole*", Martinet's "*La double articulation linguistique*", and Bühler's *Sprachtheorie*. Afterwards, it moves to the basics of phonetics, and then deals extensively with phonology: the road taken goes from Trubetzkoy's oppositions to the distinction between oppositional and contrastive traits (in the sense in which we defined them previously). The texts here are Maurice Grammont's *Traité de phonétique*, Tomás Navarro's *Manual de pronunciación española*, Martinet's "Phonology as functional phonetics" and "*Où en est la phonologie?*",

¹⁹ In the original document, the second point of the programme reads "*Condiciones para que un sistema de signos pueda ser considerado una lengua, según Martinet*".

²⁰ Although in his early works Prieto uses this term for the analysis of the content plane, by 1958 he changed it to 'noology' (see Prieto 1958b; 1964: 35). The term 'plerology' ('*plerología*' in Spanish) is a derivative (or variant) form of 'plerematics', a term coined by Hjelmslev to designate the study of the entities that make up the content plane of any given semiotic structure (Hjelmslev 1970: 152). 'Noology', on the other hand, was Prieto's term for his own semantic theory. It was intended to be applicable, in principle, to any semiotic structure, at least to the extent to which Prieto (1966: 35; 1975: 27) speaks of a 'noetic field' composing the content plane of any given semiotic structure.

²¹ In the programme, the topic is addressed as "The problem of the Spanish language in Argentina". As to why Spanish posed problems for Argentina, see the first chapter of Alonso 1935.

and Prieto's own article "*Traits oppositionnels et traits contrastifs*". After the section on phonology, there is a new discussion of *plerology* which follows, in general, the lines of the 1954 course, to wit, articulation and proportionality, but this time it also includes the problem of applying Trubetzkoy's oppositions to the content plane. Naturally, the bibliography for this section includes Jean Cantineau's article on the *significant oppositions*, Saussure's *Cours*, Roman Jakobson's and Robert Godel's respective articles on the zero sign, and Prieto's own article "*Signe articulé et signe proportionnel*". The last part of the course deals again with synchrony and diachrony, phonetic change, and Spanish linguistics; most of the bibliography revolves around the same authors: Saussure, Martinet and Prieto himself, the notable additions are Hermann Paul's *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte*, Menéndez Pidal's *Manual de gramática histórica española*, Walther von Wartburg's *Einführung in der Problematik und Methodik der Sprachwissenschaft*, and Bertil Malmberg's "*Études sur la phonétique de l'espagnol parlé en Argentine*".

The programmes for these courses demonstrate the centrality of Saussure's theory in Prieto's linguistic thought, and are analysed in more detail in the following section. When it comes to Prieto's publications, the situation is even clearer, for references to Saussure are present in virtually all of Prieto's texts. He, however, only published one note completely devoted to Saussure during his lifetime, in which he showed his depth of knowledge about the works of the Swiss master.²² The note was originally published in 1990, which means, already in the last stage of Prieto's career. It originally appeared in *En français dans le texte. Dix siècles de lumières par le livre*, and was reprinted in the *Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure* 50 (an issue dedicated to Prieto after his death in 1996). The text highlights the fact that, according to Prieto, the *Cours* "*pose en effet les bases de ce qu'on peut considérer comme la théorie des institutions, dont la langue constitue un cas privilégié [...]*" ('effectively sets up the foundations of what can be considered as the theory of institutions, of which the language constitutes a privileged case [...]' ; Prieto 1997: 16). The core of this theory of institutions consists in three aspects: (i) the distinction between relations of opposition and relations of signification,²³ (ii)

²² He also coedited, with René Amacker and Tullio de Mauro, the *Studi Saussuriani*, the *Festschrift* to honour Robert Godel in 1974.

²³ This distinction is related to the triple division posited by Prieto between the organization of the substance of expression, the organization of the substance of content, and the relation of signification that brings them together. The relations of opposition exist within each of the planes to which the organization of substance gives rise: i.e. units of expression can be opposed to each other if they belong to the same paradigm; thus opposition is, to put it in Hjelmslevian terms, a *homoplanar* relation. A relation of signification is one that exists between the two planes, as, for instance, linking expression with content.

the distinction between the institution itself as an abstract entity, and the realization in the “concrete behaviour of mankind”,²⁴ and (iii) the distinction between the way an institution works at a given point in time and the way it changes through time.²⁵ Emanuele Fadda (2013: 2) is right to attribute this characterization of Saussure to the “last” Prieto, and it is indeed useful, it seems to me, to distinguish between an early and a late, or last, stage of Prieto’s thought, as we have also done.

However, this characterization of early versus late Prieto can give the impression of a discontinuous evolution of his thought, which I believe to be illusory: it seems to me that all the linguistic theorizing of early Prieto is necessary to understand the semiotic theorizing of late Prieto. Of course, over the years, Prieto changed his opinions, and he did revisit, and sometimes abandon, some notions, but that does not make his thought discontinuous when we look at it from the point of view of its development through time. In next lines, I will try to show the continuity between the first or early Prieto and the late or last Prieto as concerns the first distinction made by Saussure, and more exactly, the *Cours*, of the so-called theory of institutions, namely the distinction between relations of opposition and of signification. The main thesis I will try to defend is that this first distinction, at least, was something already present and used in the linguistic analysis of early Prieto, and that it became a key conception for the semiotic analysis of late Prieto. In fact, it could not have been otherwise, for this distinction is the cornerstone of semiotic structures.

Opposition and contrast

Let us return to the course programmes. Although we are not able to reconstruct the courses wholly, we can indeed draw some conjectures by analysing the programmes and the academic publications of Prieto during those years. The phonology course from 1953 was divided into six sessions. The first session introduced the theoretical framework for the course. The second and third sessions introduced some basics of phonetics, and the fourth and fifth, some basics of phonology; and the sixth presented the phonological system of Spanish. During 1953, as we have said, Prieto was working on his doctoral thesis and on the article “*Traits oppositionnels et traits contrastifs*”. Georges Redard (1991) called this article the theoretical framework of the thesis, and indeed, the two works are to be read together. Prieto’s thesis was not very well received in Córdoba (almost all of the

²⁴ In general terms, this is, for Prieto, the distinction between *langue* and *parole* as read through the prism of his own theory of the semic act (see Prieto 1966: 49–59; 1975: 15–60, 116–117, 126–127).

²⁵ In general terms, this corresponds to the distinction between synchrony and diachrony.

examiners wrote that the thesis was too specialized, and that Prieto did not reach satisfying conclusions); however, his article was very well received by Martinet (who helped Prieto to publish it in *Word*). The paradox is that the thesis is, to some extent, an exercise in applying the theoretical claims Prieto elaborated in the article to the description of a phonological system, namely that of Spanish.²⁶

The present exposition will not deal with the whole of the phonological discussion involved either in the article or in the thesis²⁷ (which is nevertheless relevant for analysing the programme of the phonology course of 1953, given that in the course Prieto discussed syntagmatic units, syllables, the phonological word, and thus, very likely, some problems of prosody and accentuation), noting simply that one of the main proposals, if not the main one, Prieto was trying to advance in “*Traits oppositionnels...*”, was that the determination of the phonological content of a phoneme can only be made taking into account its position in the syllable (Prieto 1954b: 52–53).²⁸ As we have seen, according to Prieto, the (phonological) syllable defines a central position (the nucleus) and a non-central position (onset or coda). Thus, the description of a phonological system must take into account the partial systems formed by the central units on the one hand, and the non-central units on the other hand.²⁹ It follows from what we have said about opposition and

²⁶ In fact, the main theoretical source he uses in *Fonología del español moderno* is his unpublished manuscript “*Les unités phonologiques*”. The copy of the thesis located at the Buenos Aires Institute of Linguistics indicates, in Prieto’s handwriting, that this manuscript was actually “*Traits oppositionnels et traits contrastifs*”.

²⁷ An overview of it is given in Chavez Barreto 2021.

²⁸ This position, of course, is not only Prieto’s, but is already found in Saussure 1995[1916]: 79–88, 93, Hjelmslev (cf. Siertsema 1965: 79, especially the quotation of Hjelmslev that appears in that page. We do not know whether by this time Prieto had already read Hjelmslev’s *Prolegomena*; probably not, since the first French translation appeared in 1953) and Trubetzkoy.

²⁹ A very interesting consequence of his theoretical postulates is the analysis of the Spanish vibrants /r/ (a simple vibrant) and /r̄/ (a multiple vibrant) which he proposes in *Fonología del español moderno* (I write the two vibrants between bars because there is no doubt that these two sounds are indeed two different phonemes in Spanish). Now, according to Prieto, however, in Spanish there would be one single vibrant with different realizations: a simple vibrant would appear only in coda, while a multiple vibrant would appear only in onset. Thus, he proposes a different syllabification for words as ‘*hora*’ (‘hour’ [óra]) and ‘*honra*’ (‘honour’ [ónra]). According to Prieto, in ‘*hora*’, the /r/ would be associated to the coda of the first syllable ([ó.r.a], instead of the more natural [ó.ra]), and the second syllable would thus have, in relation to the second syllable of ‘*honra*’ a phonologic zero on onset. Prieto’s proposal has one major problem: his claim is that given the fact that the simple vibrant appears always on coda, and the multiple on onset, they could be simply regarded as combinatorial variants, yet, between two vowels, the simple or multiple vibration becomes a pertinent feature, cf. ‘*carro*’ ([káro] ‘car’) versus ‘*caro*’ ([káro] ‘expensive’). Indeed, the intervocalic context is the only pertinent context

contrast that the features which distinguish central units from non-central units are called contrastive features, and those which distinguish a central unit from another central unit, or a non-central unit from another non-central unit, are oppositional features. Additionally, he writes: “*En termes saussuriens, les traits oppositionnels seraient en rapport associatif, les traits contrastifs en rapport syntagmatique*” (‘In Saussurean terms, *oppositional features would be in an associative relation, contrastive features in a syntagmatic relation*’: Prieto 1954b: 55; my emphasis, I. C.).

Distinguishing between contrastive and oppositional traits in this way brings along the problem of determining, on the one hand, syntagmatic units (such as the phonological syllable) and, on the other hand, paradigms. I will not go deep into this discussion as it involves an examination of some tenets of structural phonology that are out of the scope of this article, and thus a proper treatment of this rather amounts to an article on Prieto’s reading of Trubetzkoy and Martinet; therefore, here I will pay attention only to the concepts of contrastive and oppositional features.

In the postface to the article “*Traits oppositionnels...*” published in 1975, Prieto, as already mentioned in a previous section, writes that he no longer speaks of contrastive and oppositional features, but that he considers that the oppositional and the contrastive come together to form a feature.³⁰ For our discussion, however, it is important to note that in 1954, when “*Traits oppositionnels...*” was published, Prieto distinguished between oppositional and contrastive features and that in

for the opposition between the two vibrants, in any other position neutralization is possible (cf. Valiñas 1994). Prieto would have it that the multiple or simple realization in intervocalic position would indicate a syllabic frontier, and the multiple or simple realization would thus only be a functional fact to keep the signifiers different between them. While Prieto’s proposal has certain deficiencies at the segmental level, it has some interesting consequences at the prosodic level. These consequences are illustrated in a different variant of this problem which is presented in “*Traits oppositionnels...*” a propos the difference between ‘*miro*’ ([mí.ro]) ‘I look’ and ‘*miró*’ ([mi.ró]) ‘he/she looked’ (Prieto 1954b: 53). The difference between these two words is not, according to Prieto, the fact that the first syllable is stressed in ‘*miro*’ and the second one in ‘*miró*’, but rather that the central syllable (the one that carries the stress) is [mí] in the first case, [ró] in the second, thus, the word structure of each of the words, when compared, would show that the unstressed syllable of ‘*miró*’ is opposed to a zero in ‘*miro*’ (Prieto 1954b: 54) (‘*Miro*’ and ‘*miró*’, written in italics and between quotation marks, are written according to Spanish orthographic rules.) The theoretical position of Prieto regarding the (phonological) syllable, accentuation and the phonological word, which he maintains in *Fonología del español moderno* is beginning to take form already in his very first article “*Remarques sur la nature des oppositions distinctives basées sur l’accentuation monotonique libre*” (Prieto 1952), which means that in fact Prieto’s solution to the problem of the Spanish vibrant was conceived as a solution for suprasegmental phonology, not for the segmental level. A more thorough explanation of Prieto’s analysis of the Spanish vibrants can be consulted in Chávez Barreto 2021.

³⁰ In fact, Prieto held this position already in *Principes de noologie* (Prieto 1964: 75–78).

doing so, he provided a link to the *Cours* by characterizing oppositional features as *rappports associatifs* and contrastive features as *rappports syntagmatiques*.

Course A from 1954, on the other hand, treats the topics of articulation, arbitrariness and proportionality of signs. In that same year, Prieto published his first article in the *Bulletin de la Société de linguistique de Paris*, which was entitled “*Signe articulé et signe proportionnel*”.³¹ As mentioned above, in this article Prieto discusses Cantineau’s text on *oppositions significatives*, and claims that Cantineau’s mistake was to think that the terms of the oppositions were signs in their totality; instead, for Prieto, the *plerological* system of a *langue* would be composed by single-faced entities, analogous to the single-faced entities of the phonological system, i.e. phonemes (cf. Prieto 1954a: 137, and also 1964: 34–35). However, Prieto states that a remarkable aspect of Cantineau’s work is his definition of ‘*opposition significative proportionnelle*’, for Prieto sees in this type of opposition a perfect example of the underlying mechanism of articulation present in a *langue*, of the role of this mechanism in the economy of a *langue* and its function in delimiting arbitrariness. When a sign is articulated, one of its parts, i.e. one of its articuli,³² defines it as a member of a group of signs with which it shares the articulus in question, namely, a paradigm, while the recurrence of the articulus in a series of oppositions defines a proportion between the signs. It can be seen to what extent the notions of articulation and proportionality are intertwined with those of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations (this is also true for the *Cours*, see Saussure 1995[1916]: 177–178, conceding that paradigmatic is equivalent with his *rappports associatifs*).

To be clear, Prieto’s definition of the notions of ‘opposition’ and ‘contrast’ implies that the members of a paradigm are in opposition, and the members of a syntagm are in contrast. To the extent that these two notions can be traced back to the *Cours*, it can be claimed that Prieto’s semantic theory is also deeply influenced by it. In a later text from 1958, in which Prieto is in the middle of the elaboration of his semantic theory, we find that two signifieds that are different can either be in opposition or in contrast with each other, while two signifiers that are different can only be in opposition with each other (Prieto 1958a).³³

³¹ This text is listed as Prieto 1954a in the References of this article and the one from which we extracted most of the definitions of our key notions.

³² Cf. “*En latin articulus signifie ‘membre, partie, subdivision dans une suite de choses’ [...]*” (“In Latin, *articulus* means ‘member, part, subdivision in a series of things’ [...]; Saussure 1995[1916]: 26).

³³ For a more detailed, and excellent, exposition of this aspect of Prieto’s theory in relation to his *Noologie*, see Simeonidu-Christidou 1998, especially p. 207. It is important to note that Prieto’s semantic theory begins with sentences, not with words. In the proper terminology proposed by Prieto, the starting point of his semantic theory would be the ‘*sème*’, a term which Prieto borrows from Eric Buysens (see Chávez Barreto 2020).

We are aware of the reactions that the equation of the *Cours' rapports associatifs* with the notion of *paradigmatic* relations can evoke (cf. Meschonnic 2009 and Joseph's 2018 comment³⁴). It would seem that this treatment would tend towards a fixation of the elements of the paradigm, and render the *rapports* merely the dissection tools of linguists. Indeed, in the *Cours*, we can read: "*Les groupes formés par association mentale ne se bornent pas à rapprocher les termes qui présentent quelque chose de commun; l'esprit saisit aussi la nature des rapports qui les relient dans chaque cas et crée par là autant de séries associatives qu'il y a de rapports divers*" (Saussure 1995[1916]: 173), and later on: "*Un mot quelconque peut toujours évoquer tout ce qui est susceptible de lui être associé d'une manière ou d'une autre*" (Saussure 1995[1916]: 174).³⁵

It seems that a correct assessment of this particular problem from Prieto's point of view would have to take into account his definition of 'word', and his treatment of morphology (which is heavily influenced by Martinet's idea of *moneme*³⁶ and of the first articulation, cf. Prieto 1954a: 137), but these aspects will not be discussed here for reasons mentioned above: they are too intertwined with Prieto's phonological theory. Let us simply note that Prieto's notion of paradigm is interconnected with that of *commutation* – a notion that, as he explicitly says, he understands following Hjelmslev,³⁷ and secondly, underscore the asymmetry that Prieto identifies between content and expression planes. This distinction is crucial.

³⁴ See also Capt-Artaud 2007 where the author also relates Saussure's *rapports associatifs* to Prieto's theory. One of the many interesting points brought up by Capt-Artaud is that while she criticizes the Hjelmslevian notion of paradigm (Capt-Artaud 2007: 55), she deems Prieto's treatment of 'opposition' and 'contrast' as very useful to explain the purely semantic aspect of Saussure's *rapports associatifs* (cf. Capt-Artaud 2007: 62 ff.).

³⁵ "Mental association creates other groups besides those based on the comparing of terms that have something in common; through its grasp of the nature of the relations that bind the terms together, the mind creates as many associative series as there are diverse relations" (Saussure 2011[1916]: 125); "[a] word can always evoke everything that can be associated with it in one way or another" (Saussure 2011[1916]: 126).

³⁶ 'Moneme' is understood by Martinet, as well as by Prieto (see Prieto 1975: 33, where he notices that the term was coined by Frei, not by Martinet), as the minimum sign, to wit, the entities with which the first articulation works (see Martinet 1972[1960]: 23).

³⁷ The term 'commutation' was indeed a coinage of glossematics, but its adoption by functionalists inevitably changed its content. Prieto (1960: 55–58) explains that for Hjelmslev, commutation is a function between two members of a paradigm, whereas for other linguists, such as Martinet, commutation is a procedure for determining the pertinent features of phonemes. For Prieto, commutation is useful to explain the pertinence of a feature, but not for determining that a given feature is pertinent (cf. Prieto 1972: 35). It is precisely because commutation explains the pertinence of a feature that Prieto's understanding of it is closer to Hjelmslev's (i.e. as a relation between two members of a paradigm).

When Prieto says that two signifieds that are different can either be in opposition or in contrast he means that they can be, or not, realizing the same sense, but the commutability of the elements of the signifier that are involved in the changing of the elements of the signified is not determined by the sense, but by the pertinent features of the signified that are necessarily present in the sense (Prieto 1954a: 58–59). In other words, for Prieto, the paradigms on the content plane are not always in a relation of exclusion, and for determining if they are in inclusion or intersection, it is necessary to distinguish neatly between the abstract class of signifieds and the concrete entities of sense, just as sounds and phonemes are distinguished in the analysis of the expression plane (cf. Prieto 1954a: 60–63).

A correct assessment of what the notion of paradigm implies for Prieto concerning the *Cours' rapports associatifs* requires taking a look at how these notions work within Prieto's semiotic theory.

Classes and concepts

We have seen that what is treated in the *Cours* as *rapports associatifs* is reinterpreted by Prieto as a paradigmatic relation; we have also seen that the relationship holding between the elements of a paradigm is that of opposition. For two elements to be opposed they must have some similarities and some dissimilarities; that is to say, there must be a basis of comparison upon which the two elements can be said to be different.

In this sense, the *rapports associatifs* can be related to the *rapports de comparaison* for it is both the comparison between two elements and the recognition of their difference that allows us to identify them as members of the same or of a different paradigm.

In the *Cours*, the *rapports de comparaison* are introduced as part of the definition of value (cf. Saussure 1995[1916]: 159). A value, it is stated in the *Cours*, is always relational. The relations that determine a given value are of two orders. First, there is a relation of the thing whose value is to be determined to a “dissimilar thing”, for which it is exchangeable. Second, a relation to a “similar thing” that can be compared to the thing whose value is to be determined. This is the *rappor de comparaison*.

It is possible to say that both the *rapports associatifs* and the *rapports de comparaison* create “groups” (cf. Thibault 1996: 257, where he also speaks of “grouping”), or even sets. The *rapports associatifs* as defined in the *Cours* can work on the basis of morphological structure, phonetic resemblance, or semantic kinship (*analogie des signifiés* [‘analogy of the signifieds’]; Saussure 1995[1916]:

174); it seems to us that therefore they work mainly on the basis of proportionality and articulation. Both proportionality and articulation, as principles of a *langue*, are factors of order and of classification. Thus, a *rapport d'échange* on the basis of which synonymity between two words could be established, necessarily implies *rapports de comparaison* and *rapports associatifs*.

We have seen in the previous sections that the early Prieto dealt in depth with these principles in linguistics. The richness of Prieto's position comes from the "epistemological" interpretation he makes of these tenets. It seems, however, that his "epistemological" interpretation can be better termed 'cognitive', and thus 'semiotic', inasmuch as he reached parallel conclusions to that of Sebeok (2001: 3, 8) in conceiving semiotics as a study of forms of knowledge.³⁸

The use Prieto made of set theory³⁹ allowed him to generalize these principles to knowledge *tout court*. In his view the *rapports associatifs* and *rapports de comparaison* were something like "set predicates"; namely predicative functions that create partitions in, and thus order, a given substance.⁴⁰ The form that arises from this partitioning is a form that defines a "cognitive construction" (cf. Prieto 1988: 62). This position of Prieto's is clearly presented in his article from 1990 "*Classe et concept*". In order to appreciate the contribution Prieto makes to general semiotics in this article, it is necessary to state clearly what he understands by 'class' and 'concept'.

A 'concept'⁴¹ for Prieto is defined as a predicative function with the form ' $x + (-) \text{ is } y$ '. X and y are here variables and they occupy "syntactic places", and '+' or '-' denote the "positive" or "negative" value of the predicative function (and thus ' $x - \text{ is } y$ ' is read as ' x is not y '). However, for this predicative function to be a proper 'concept', one of its "syntactic places" (the variable x or y) must be non-empty; thus, a 'concept' would be, for instance, ' $x + \text{ is white}$ '. The extension of a concept is the set of objects, or arguments, pertaining to a given universe of discourse that can saturate the empty syntactic place of the predicative function that defines the concept (i.e. that can turn the predicative function into a true proposition). Accordingly, the extension of a concept is defined also by its complement, i.e. by all

³⁸ This interpretation of Prieto's theory, and the advantages it could have for a general semiotics have been dealt with in Chávez Barreto 2018: 106–107 and in Chávez Barreto 2019.

³⁹ Set theory can be defined as a branch of mathematics which studies sets. Prieto often would speak of *logique des classes* instead. The reference he often quotes in this regard is Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*, which might explain why he spoke of the logic of classes and not of set theory. Chávez 2020 struggles with this problem in a way that is not very satisfactory.

⁴⁰ This ordering is made in substance itself, according to Prieto 1988: 62. This is why the contrastive aspect of a feature is termed a 'dimension' of the object; and it refers to *something exhibited by the "materiality"* of it. This idea was hinted at already in Prieto 1975.

⁴¹ Both 'concept' and 'class' are technical terms in Prieto's theory.

the other objects that pertain to the same universe of discourse but which cannot saturate the empty syntactic place of the predicative function that defines the concept. Thus, a concept for Prieto is a predicative function that groups elements pertaining to one and the same universe of discourse. It is therefore a homoplanar relation, and inasmuch as it is so, it can be seen as oppositional.

A ‘class’, on the other hand, is a predicative function of a different form. The schema Prieto uses to symbolize it is the following: ‘ $x + (-) \rightarrow y$ ’. Again, for this predicative function to be able to determine a ‘class’, one of its syntactic places must be non-empty. The difference between a class and a concept, is that the underlying relation expressed by each of them as predicative functions is, for concepts, attribution; and for classes, causality. This is expressed linguistically by ‘is’ in the case of concepts; and by ‘signifies’ or ‘produces’ in the case of classes. It is important to note that ‘is’, ‘signifies’ and ‘produces’ serve here as mere labels for a cognitive construction that in the first case attributes a feature to an object, and in the second and third cases links a set of objects in one universe of discourse to a set of objects in *another* universe of discourse. A class can be thus called a heteroplanar relation, and to this is due its being a relation of signification.

In this sense, concepts can be said to be established on the basis of *rappports de comparaison* and *rappports associatifs*; while classes work on the basis of *rappports d’échange* (Prieto 1990: 65–66). What should be underscored here is the fact that ‘concept’ is being used here in a technical sense: it does not mean ‘signified’ as it does in the *Cours* (e.g. in Saussure 1995[1916]: 99), but it simply denotes a one-faced entity that partakes of a semiotic structure, and in this sense a phoneme, or rather a given phonological content, could be called a concept. In the same way, ‘class’ is being used here as a technical term: the members of a class will be two-faced entities that partake of a semiotic structure, and a moneme, to the extent that it is a two-faced entity, would thus be a class.

Now, for Prieto, classes are *logically* previous to concepts; i.e. it is only “after” the subject “recognizes” the relation of equivalence that the subject groups together certain objects that are capable to saturate the empty syntactic place of a predicative function that defines a class, and seeks to establish the concept that determines such given set of objects. Conversely, what groups together certain objects is precisely that they are able to transform the predicative function that defines a class into a true proposition. This is nothing more than a consequence of Prieto’s statement that knowledge and praxis always come together; and that an object does not (and could not) precede knowledge (Prieto 1975: 92–94, 151–152).

This might seem contradictory considering the “substantialist” position Prieto often professed (e.g. Prieto 1975: 88, 126–127), yet it is not. On the one hand, the pertinence of a feature is never something that the feature possesses in itself, and,

on the other hand, the very recognition of the feature as such implies both the cognitive apprehension of the object and its materiality, for the feature cannot be recognized without it being afforded by the object's materiality and without the pertinence criteria supplied by a practice. Therefore, the pertinence of the white colour of a sheet of paper is not inherent to the whiteness, nor to the paper: the pertinence of the white colour is dependent upon the practice executed by the subject using, or trying to produce, the sheet of paper. Nevertheless, the possibility of recognizing whiteness in the paper must be afforded by the paper. According to Prieto, the pertinent features that define classes and concepts must always have a material correlate, and this is as true for 'signified' and 'sense' as it is for 'white' and 'white paper'.

Conclusion

We conclude this paper with two remarks. It seems that we have shown the continuity between some problems treated by the early Prieto in his linguistic works and the solutions he gave in them, and the theoretical semiotic position developed by the late Prieto. This continuity takes the form of a generalization of principles, but this generalization is far from reducing cognition (or even *semiosis*) to a linguistic mechanism. Perhaps the more eloquent proof of this is the link Prieto established between his semiotic position and certain psychological theories, the most interesting for the present work being Jean Piaget's genetic epistemology⁴² (cf. for instance, Prieto 1990: 60, 66). A proper examination of the consequences this link has, however, would call for another study on Prieto as reader of Piaget.

The second and last remark is that Prieto was always very well aware of the central role of both the *rappports de comparaison* and the *rappports d'échange*. In an interview he gave to a Mexican journal in 1979, on the occasion of an academic visit to Mexico City, Prieto (1979: 8) stated:

El estructuralismo de Troubetzkoy parte del sistema de oposiciones que es el sistema fonológico, pero para explicarlo mediante otro tipo de relaciones que es la significación [sic]. El estructuralismo europeo, especialmente el de tradición saussuriana [sic] de Hjelmslev y Troubetzkoy, nunca ignoró el sujeto ni tuvo miedo del 'mentalismo'.

Troubetzkoy's structuralism departs from a system of oppositions which is the phonological system, but it does so in order to explain it by means of another type of

⁴² The relationship between Piaget and Prieto, especially the importance of Piaget for the late semiotic theories of Prieto, was repeatedly pointed out to me as being decisive by Pierre Pellegrino in the course of our talks in Buenos Aires during the 14th World Congress of Semiotics, so let me place here a sign of my deepest gratitude to him.

relations, namely [relations] of signification. European structuralism, especially the one in the Saussurean tradition of Hjelmslev and Trubetzkoy, never ignored the subject nor was it afraid of “mentalism”.

It is thus necessary to acknowledge that the notions of opposition, comparison and associativity in Prieto’s theory are dependent upon that of signification, for it is by means of classes that concepts are to be explained. The necessity of putting these approaches to work in the elaboration of a general semiotic theory that can synthesize the current findings in our field (e.g. the recent theories being proposed by biosemioticians) with the so-called “Saussurean” tradition is thus made evident.

Acknowledgements: I thank Ekaterina Velmezova, and the reviewers of this paper for all the comments and suggestions that helped improve the text. A major part of the research for this article was done at the Luis J. Prieto Archives of the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba* and the Institute of Linguistics of the *Universidad de Buenos Aires*. I wish to thank the personnel of both archives, especially Analía Santillán and Lucas Miranda at Córdoba, and Camila Indart, Martina Damato and Guillermo Toscano y García at Buenos Aires. A special acknowledgement goes to María Teresa Dalmaso and María Inés Arrizabalaga, who helped me considerably during my time in Argentina. My research in Argentina was funded by a Dora Plus activity 1.2. PhD mobility scholarship granted to me by the Estonian Archimedes Foundation and the European Regional Development Fund, plus support from PRG314.

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**Оппозиция, сравнение и ассоциативность:
Курс общей лингвистики глазами Луиса Х. Прието**

Цель статьи состоит в определении того, какую роль сыграли отношения сравнения и ассоциативности, введенные в сосюрсовском *Курсе общей лингвистики*, в теориях Луиса Х. Прието. Сначала мы рассматриваем работы Прието в свете историографии, а затем – с позиции экзегетического подхода. Статья открывается представлением и анализом трех программ курсов, которые Прието читал в Национальном университете Кордовы в начале 1950-х годов. Анализ этих программ показывает, что в основе размышлений лингвистического характера Прието лежал сосюрсовский *Курс*. После этого предпринимается попытка установить преемственность между теоретическими положениями, заложенными в программах курсов Прието, и основным положением, выдвинутым в статье Прието «*Classe et concept. Sur la pertinence et sur les rapports saussuriens “de comparaison” et “d’échange”*». Устанавливая эту преемственность, мы стараемся показать, (1) что *Курс* постоянно влиял на научное мышление Прието на протяжении всей его карьеры и (2) что это влияние проявлялось в том, что Прието не обобщал лингвистические принципы как таковые, а скорее утверждал, что лингвистические принципы являются частным случаем более общих – семиотических – принципов.

**Vastandus, võrdlus ja assotsiatiivsus:
Luis J. Prieto “Üldkeeleteaduse kursuse” lugejana**

Artikli eesmärgiks on demonstreerida rolli, mida Luis J. Prieto teooriates mängivad võrdlus- ja assotsiatiivsusuhed, nagu neid tutvustatakse Saussure'i "Üldkeeleteaduse kursuses". Seda tehakse esiteks historiograafilise lähenemise abil ja teiseks Prieto töödele eksegeetiliselt lähenedes. Artiklis tutvustatakse ja analüüsitakse kolme programmi, mis vastavad kolmele kursusele, mida Prieto õpetas *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*'s 1950ndate aastate alguses. Nende programmide analüüs näitab Saussure'i "Kursuse" keskset kohta Prieto keeleteadusteooriates. Seejärel tehakse katse näidata järjepidevust kursuseprogrammide eelduseks olevate teoreetiliste põhimõtete ja Prieto artiklis "*Classe et concept. Sur la pertinence et sur les rapports saussuriens 'de comparaison' et 'd'échange'*" esitatud põhiväite vahel. Seda järjepidevust konstrueerides üritame näidata : (1) jätkuvat mõju, mida "Kursus" avaldas Prieto mõtlemisele kogu tema karjääri vältel ja (2) seda, et see mõju avaldub tõigas, et Prieto ei üldistanud lingvistilisi printsiipe kui selliseid, vaid oli pigem seisukohal, et lingvistilised põhimõtted on laiemate semiootiliste printsiipide erijuhtumid.