Sylvie Patron (Ed.)
Toward a Poetic Theory of Narration

Trends in Linguistics
Studies and Monographs

Editor
Volker Gast

Editorial Board
Walter Bisang
Hans Henrich Hock
Natalia Levshina
Heiko Narrog
Matthias Schlesewsky
Amir Zeldes
Niina Ning Zhang

Editor responsible for this volume
Volker Gast

Volume 269

Toward a Poetic Theory of Narration

Essays of S.-Y. Kuroda

Edited by
Sylvie Patron

Preface

As I write this, it is five years to the day since the death of my husband, Sige-Yuki Kuroda. Known in print as S.-Y. Kuroda, but universally among English – and French – speaking colleagues as Yuki, over a period of more than four decades he had an impact on virtually all areas of linguistics: phonology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, philosophy of language, mathematical linguistics, historical linguistics, poetics, and narrative theory. Much of his work centered around his native Japanese, which he used to illustrate broader issues. That said, the very last thing he was working on, only two days before he died, was a way of looking at the issue of voicing assimilation in Russian. That too, however, stemmed from his earlier work on the phenomenon of *rendaku* in Japanese, in which he argued against the presumed source and derivation of voicing in certain kinds of compounds in Japanese. He had also recently been working on issues in the translation of Shakespeare's sonnets into Japanese; he was dissatisfied with existing translations due both to word choices and primarily to the metrical choices made by the translators, and had started translating about ten on his own.

At the UCSD tribute event in Kuroda's honor a few weeks after his death, one of his former students, Samuel Epstein, remarked that much like the case of the parable of the blind men and the elephant, scholars in one sub-area of linguistics assumed that because of his prolific output in that particular domain, Kuroda was focused entirely on that area, and they would then be surprised to find out that the same Kuroda who had done such masterful work on, say, Japanese syntax had also done major research about formal pragmatics. That is in fact the case with the works gathered into this volume. Kuroda's work on narrative theory constituted only a small part of his scholarly output and occupied only a few years of his long career, yet it has had a profound influence on many language and literature specialists.

Outside of linguistics proper, at least if the English version of Wikipedia is to be believed, Kuroda is known largely for his worth in comparing the equivalence of various kinds of automata with various kinds of grammar. That too was consuming some of his attention near the end of his life. His influence in the field of mathematical linguistics has been recognized by the establishment in 2014 of the Kuroda award in mathematical linguistics by the Association of Computational Linguistics. While others have dedicated special issues of journals to his memory, this is the only enduring tribute to his influence.

The main thrust of Kuroda's work was in the domain of syntax and syntactic theory. Even before entering graduate school in linguistics, he had published a book in Japanese on Chomsky's ideas. His 1965 dissertation places him in the position of being the father of modern Japanese generative linguistics, containing

the germs of much of his future work as well as others who have followed him; indeed, almost every paper in Japanese linguistics still refers to it.

Kuroda's linguistics work used aspects of Japanese grammar to illuminate general issues in linguistics; indeed, much of his work has forced linguists to address issues that they might have previously swept under the rug. For example, point of view can help to determine which kinds of predicates in a sentence are grammatical and which are not, not only in Japanese but also in other languages like English. For example, while in English it is perfectly possible to say "I am hungry", it is difficult if not impossible to say "you are hungry"; rather, the more natural way to say it is something like "you look hungry" or "you seem hungry". In English a sentence like "you are hungry" is all right under some conditions, but the equivalent sentence in Japanese is totally ungrammatical. In my own early work on American Sign Language (ASL), I referred to Kuroda's work in order to explicate one aspect of what is now called role shift, namely the use of what looks like direct quotation but is in fact closer to *style indirect libre*. Below are just a few examples of other ideas of his that have maintained their relevance for linguistic theory over many years:

Multiple subjects: In series of papers including "Whether we/you agree or not", Kuroda took advantage of an aspect of sentence structure that goes back to work by Chomsky in the late 1970s, namely the appearance of multiple specifiers (possible subjects) in syntactic structures. Exploiting that possibility, Kuroda proposed that sentences have subjects within verb phrases and that those subjects move up to the more usual subject position under certain circumstances. Such an analysis is now routine in linguistics, but Kuroda was the first to discuss it.

Characterizing different kinds of subjects: Related to the discussion above is Kuroda's resurrection of a very useful distinction first discussed by the German philosophers Marty and Brentano in the 19th century, namely the notion of *categorical* vs. *thetic* judgments. A categorical judgment is a statement that is *about* something or someone, namely the subject of the sentence, whereas a thetic judgment is a statement about a state of affairs that does not involve predication. This is another example of how Kuroda's theories were informed by his work on Japanese: the subject of a categorical judgment is marked in Japanese by a different particle from the particle that marks the subject of a thetic judgment. Other linguists have noted the parallels between the categorical/thetic distinction and the distinction between stage- and individual-level predicates, and others have suggested that the subjects of categorical and thetic judgments occupy distinct positions in syntactic structures.

Phonology: Kuroda's work on Japanese phonology led him to propose a theory that could account not only for aspects of Japanese phonology but also Korean and, in his final incomplete work, Russian. Ironically, the lore (Morris

Halle, personal communication) is that when he arrived as a graduate student at MIT in 1962, all he wanted to work on was syntax; in an effort to force him to pay attention to phonology, he was assigned to do a long paper in that area; he took an existing grammar of a Native American language and recast it in terms of then-current theory. The resulting work was published by MIT Press in the mid-1960s and is still read today.

Boundary areas: Much of Kuroda's work was concerned with the interface between syntax and semantics, or structure and meaning, and by extension the philosophy of language. One of his favorite sayings was "syntax without semantics is like a doughnut without a hole", which was the source of the title of his first collection of papers, *The (W)hole of the Doughnut*, translated into French by Nicolas Ruwet as *Aux quatre coins de la linguistique*. In a way, the work on narrative theory collected in this volume could be seen as an extension of Kuroda's fascination with the relation between structure and meaning.

I am very glad that Sylvie Patron has engaged to gather the scattered papers from different times and sources into one place, and hope that this volume will enhance Kuroda's influence in the fields of language and literature.

Susan Fischer

Acknowledgements

Table of contents

Introduction

> My interest in this area also has its origin in problems in Japanese syntax, but the problems dealt with in these articles are of a general character.[1]

> Last, Kuroda's works on narrative theory [...] seem to me to be fundamental for the light they throw on the links between language and communication. Chomsky had already queried the idea that language was defined by the communicative function in a few programmatic remarks. But Kuroda was the one who provided decisive evidence, based on strict linguistic and philosophic arguments, that language cannot be reduced to its communicative function; in particular, a "communicational" theory of narrative is incapable of accounting for all varieties of text.[2]

> For observing that a poem, a novel or a play is made of "words" is not enough to justify, on that account alone, accumulating in relation to such objects all the fragments of knowledge that they illustrate. To do so would be to drift toward an encyclopaedic enumeration of detail which would never amount to theorization – a little like Plato's account of Hippias' sophistry.[3]

The six essays contained in this volume are all concerned, either centrally or in a more marginal way, with the problem of fictional narration considered in a linguistic light. The texts question the linguistic foundations of particular existing theories of narration, as well as the place that a more descriptively adequate theory of fictional narration might occupy within a general theory of language use. Most of the essays were written and published in the 1970s (apart from the sixth, which was published in 1987, although the introductory paragraph specifies that it was written nearly ten years earlier). They should, of course, be read and resituated in the context of their time and their particular intellectual circumstances. Yet I shall consider that I have reached my goal in preparing this edition if I can show that despite their (relative) age, Kuroda's texts are still of immediate theoretical import.

It might I daresay be argued that this edition gives a distorted picture of the works of S.-Y. Kuroda. It is true that it ignores, or seems to ignore, an essential dimension of his research: its interdisciplinarity.[4] Kuroda's bibliography includes texts on phonology, syntax (Kuroda was the first linguist to apply the methods of transformational-generative grammar to the study of Japanese), semantics,

---

1 Kuroda 1979a: VIII. On Kuroda 1973a and 1976a (see Ch. 1 and 3 of the present volume). For complete references of the texts and articles cited, see the bibliography, pp. 151–159.

2 Ruwet 1979: 11 (trans. mine, S. N.). On Kuroda [1973a] 1979c and [1974a] 1979c (see, in this volume, Ch. 1 and 2).

3 Dominicy 1991: 152 (trans. mine, S. N.).

4 See Kuroda 1979a and 1979c. See also Georgopoulos and Ishihara (eds.) 1991.

pragmatics, mathematical linguistics, the philosophy of language, history and the epistemology of linguistics.[5] The essays collected in this volume represent only a small portion of his publications (although not an insignificant portion: for example, Kuroda was also the first formal linguist to turn his attention to the representation of point of view in fictional narrative). It seems to me, however, that from another angle, interdisciplinarity is contained within the essays themselves: Japanese grammar in "Where epistemology, style, and grammar meet: A case study from Japanese"; semantics in the same essay, "On grammar and narration" and "Reflections on the foundations of narrative theory, from a linguistic point of view"; pragmatics in "Some thoughts on the foundations of the theory of language use" and "The reformulated theory of speech acts: Toward a theory of language use", and the philosophy of language in "A study of the so-called topic *wa* in passages from Tolstoi, Lawrence, and Faulkner (of course, in Japanese translation)". It could even be said that the essays, in the manner of a synecdoche, summarize and synthesize the nature and strength of Kuroda's complete works. They include ideas and principles that Kuroda had in common with his community of university and research colleagues: autonomy and the primacy of syntax, recourse to speakers' judgments, the opposition between linguistic competence and performance, mentalism; they also contain a certain number of characteristics that contributed powerfully to his originality: the primacy of Japanese (Kuroda always used Japanese as a basis for his critique of generalizations based on English; Japanese often helped him clarify fundamental aspects of language which are not necessarily expressed in other languages), his constant interest in semantics and the philosophical inflection of linguistics, drawn notably from European philosophy of language.

The stylistic and thematic unity of the essays should also be noted, over and above their differences which I shall discuss later. Throughout the first five, the set of problems dealing with the relations between language and communication can be seen as a common thread. The last essay (in the chronological order of publication) picks up on some of the themes and characteristics of the first, although it does not lead to the same sort of generalization (it stays within the framework of Japanese linguistics and the syntactic and semantic analysis of *wa*). The essays complete each other and draw on each other; when need be, they return to earlier suggestions to modify, complicate or resituate them in a different theoretical context. Note that the second essay, "On grammar and narration", is reworked and developed in the third, "Reflections on the foundations of narrative theory". However, Kuroda treats them as two distinct articles and I felt it advis-

---

5 See the bibliography published on the University of California in San Diego website (UCSD): Web. n.d., http://ling.ucsd.edu/kuroda/bibliography.html.

able to present both to the reader. As far as style, in the broad sense of the term, is concerned, one main characteristic of the essays is Kuroda's concern with theorization. Kuroda never falls into the trap of the "encyclopaedic enumeration of detail" mentioned in the epigraph by Marc Dominicy, which is so frequent in linguistic and stylistic studies today. He can often be seen ruling out considerations or secondary objections which might have clouded the issue. He shows himself to be constantly concerned with the clarity of his demonstration, following and making readers follow its line of argument, emphasizing the main points and decisive arguments. Kuroda also has favourite words and expressions: "essential", "essentially", "relevant", "be that as it may". He is fond of employing terms used in mathematics: "the illocutionary effect remains invariant under substitution of hearers".[6] That does not stop him demonstrating distance and humour or taking the liberty of making jokes ("linguistic performance is *histoire*!"[7]) and irreverent remarks, or ones which might be so judged on adopting a diametrically opposed stance with no critical distance ("There is nothing sacred about Searle's words"[8]).

The reader will have understood that this edition is also intended to be an homage to S.-Y. Kuroda, who died on the 25th of February 2009. It grew out of the encounters and discussions which took place at the one-day conference, "Aux quatre coins de la linguistique: journée d'hommage à Yuki Kuroda" [To the four corners of linguistics: a day of homage to Yuki Kuroda][9] and has been prepared in collaboration with his widow, Susan Fischer (to whom I am indebted, notably, for the discovery of "A study of the so-called topic *wa* in passages from Tolstoi, Lawrence, and Faulkner").

1 The intellectual background to Kuroda's essays

As mentioned above, Kuroda's essays cannot be properly understood without situating them in the context of their time and their particular intellectual cir-

---

6 Ch. 5, p. 127.

7 Ch. 3, p. 70.

8 Ch. 5, p. 123.

9 Organized by Jacqueline Guéron and Anne Zribi-Hertz for the "Langues et grammaire" [Languages and Grammar] team of the "Structures formelles du langage" [Formal Structures of Language] Mixed Research Unit (CNRS/University of Paris 8-Vincennes-Saint-Denis), Centre Pouchet, 10 September 2009 (with the participation of Ann Banfield, Joseph Emonds, Susan Fischer, Jacqueline Guéron, Christian Leclère, Takuya Nakamura, Sylvie Patron, Mireille Piot, Jean-Roger Vergnaud and Anne Zribi-Hertz).

cumstances. This perspective will lead me to address the follow points in turn. First, I shall briefly introduce the moment in the history of generative linguistics known as "generative semantics", which coincides with the period of drafting and publishing the essays (of drafting alone in the case of the sixth, which in any case deals only distantly with these issues). Having presented Kuroda's position in relation to the theoretical and certain empirical propositions of generative semantics, in the second section I shall recall the terms of the polemic between John R. Searle and Noam Chomsky concerning the essential function of language, which is the starting point for the fourth and fifth essays. Last, I shall mention the early days of (French, "structuralist" in the sense of generalized, not linguistic, structuralism) narratology which Kuroda identified as a communicational theory of narration and opposed to his own view of fictional narrative.

1.1

Generative semantics came into being within the theoretical framework of transformational-generative grammar, many aspects of which it has integrated. It contrasts with the "classical" theory of generative grammar through the position granted to semantics in the model: it aims to integrate semantics into grammar, whereas Chomsky founded the theory of generative grammar on the independence of the concepts of grammar (syntax and phonology) relative to semantics. It also aims to distance itself from the attempt to include a semantic interpretation component in the so-called "Katz-Postal-Chomsky"[10] theory (in general the term "classic" or "standard" theory refers to this second stage). Stemming from a small group of linguists, including Georges Lakoff, James D. McCawley and John R. Ross, generative semantics gave rise to a number of either "active" or "reactive" publications from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. The term "generative semantics" itself seems to have been invented by Georges Lakoff,[11] but its use spread from 1970–1971 and the first debate on generative semantics, at the same time as the term "interpretive semantics".[12] To summarize, Jerrold J. Katz referred thus to two competing semantic theories: one based on syntax (interpretive semantics), the other on semantics (generative semantics). In the first, which he defended, the syntactic component generates structures which function as input both to the semantic component (to produce semantic representations) as well as the transformational component, then to the phonological component (to produce

---

10 See Katz and Postal 1964; Chomsky 1965.
11 See Lakoff 1976 (written in 1963 and published in 1976).
12 See Katz 1970; McCawley 1971.

phonetic representations). In the second theory, again according to Katz, the semantic component takes the place of the base component to generate semantic representations functioning as input to the transformational component, then to the phonological component. Nevertheless, this presentation of the difference between the two theories as a simple matter of *directionality*, in other words of the order of intervention of the different components, masks deeper theoretical differences, notably concerning how the semantic component and the semantic representations are viewed. It was roundly criticized by McCawley, Lakoff and even Chomsky.[13]

Without claiming to be exhaustive in relation to the theoretical or concrete propositions of generative semantics nor to the bibliographic references cited, in essence generative semantics is characterized by the elimination of a number of concepts and distinctions, in particular that between syntax and semantics, represented in the standard theory of generative grammar by the existence of distinct syntactic and semantic components (an important stage in giving up the distinction was McCawley's challenge of the syntactic treatment of the selection constraints of lexical items put forward by Chomsky in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*: for McCawley, such phenomena are semantic rather than syntactic: they are aspects of more general semantic phenomena of presupposition[14]). The concept of deep (syntactic) structure and the distinction between transformations and the rules of semantic interpretation were also abandoned. The general idea is that in generative semantics, deep structures and semantic representations coincide. The single level thus formed constitutes something generative semanticians call an "underlying structure", which contains detailed semantic information, and its conversion into a surface structure involves only one sort of rule: syntactic transformation. Generative semantics also contain a strong proposition regarding the form of representations: syntactic and semantic representations are objects of the same formal nature, the common representational apparatus being formed using tree diagrams. However, in the place of traditional syntax categories (V, N, Adj, etc.) at the nodes of the tree, there are categories corresponding to symbolic logic (S for *propositional function*, V for *predicate*, NP for the different *arguments* of the function).

Kuroda's position in the theoretical and empirical debates on generative semantics (leaving the non-scientific aspects of the debates to one side for the moment) was, as ever, original. In 1969, before the first controversy therefore, Kuroda defended Chomsky's views in an article published in response to McCawley, "Remarks on selectional restrictions and presuppositions". Looking back

---

13 See McCawley 1971; Lakoff 1971; Chomsky [1969] 1972.
14 See Chomsky 1965; McCawley 1968.

at his article today, its conclusions seem quite nuanced. They show in any case real attention to the propositions put forward by his adversary. Kuroda states his agreement with McCawley "when he says that selectional restrictions are actually semantic if by this is simply meant that a variety of operations that would be involved in semantic presupposition are automatically involved in description of selectional restrictions". But he distances himself from McCawley "when he adds 'rather than syntactic', and by doing so means that the syntactic component is independent of matters related to selectional restrictions".[15] Another far more fundamental point of contention concerns the possibility of accounting for presuppositions and semantic representations more generally using a formal structure like the one used for syntactic representations (which Kuroda elsewhere terms the "syntacticization" of semantic representations and associates with a lack of discrimination between the forms of primary data in the case of syntax and semantics[16]).

The originality of Kuroda's position appears even more clearly in "Anton Marty and the transformational theory of grammar", where Kuroda appears in a way to be more Chomskyan than Chomsky himself. The first part of this long article, or essay,[17] successively presents Chomsky's earlier positions on the relation between semantic representation and deep structure (standard theory), Charles J. Fillmore's[18] "case grammar", generative semantics, Chomsky's position at the time ("extended standard theory")[19] and innovated theories of transformational-generative grammar.[20] It alludes to the possibility that case grammar and generative semantics might simply be "notational variants" of standard theory – a recurrent theme in the debates on generative semantics. But this was not the main topic of the essay, nor the way in which it "touch[ed] on the current issues in transformational linguistics".[21] Rather, through a reinterpretation of Anton Marty's grammatical theory in the conceptual framework of transformational-generative grammar, the essay offers an innovation of the standard theory in a direction not represented in the development of Chomsky's extended standard theory. According to Kuroda, Marty's theory can be compared to a "non-standard" transformational theory, where the relation between semantic representation and deep structure is very different from the standard theory. In addition

---

15 Kuroda 1969: 162.

16 See Kuroda [1974b] 1979a: 252.

17 Published in French translation and in an abridged version in 1971, then in English in 1972, and reprinted in Kuroda 1979a.

18 See Fillmore 1968.

19 See Chomsky [1969] 1972; 1972.

20 See Dougherty 1969; Jackendoff 1969; Emonds 1970; Culicover and Jackendoff 1971.

21 Kuroda [1971, 1972a] 1979a: 80.