

Groot, Albert Willem de

b. 13 January 1892, Groningen, The Netherlands

d. 14 December 1963, Laren, The Netherlands

Life and Work

After having studied Classical Philology in Groningen, De Groot became a teacher of classical languages. He finished his doctoral dissertation in 1919 and became a professor at the University of Amsterdam in 1921. Initially, his main field of study was Greek and Latin prose and metrics; this inspired his later work on intonation patterns. In 1928, attending the first Congress of Linguists in The Hague, he was attracted by Prague structuralism. With his fellow-countryman H.J. Pos and N. Van Wijk he contributed to the development of phonology with several articles devoted to the functional approach of sounds (with application to Dutch). The structuralist-functional approach was extended to morphology and especially syntax in De Groot's post-war studies (1949). De Groot not only studied different word-groups and sentence-types and their structure in Dutch but also tried to describe intonation as part of a comprehensive and adequate description of linguistic entities such as words, word groups and sentences, language being an integrated system in which meaning and form are correlated. In 1948 De Groot, together with Anton Reichling created the journal Lingua, International Review of General Linguistics. After five years (1951-56) of teaching classical languages and linguistics at the University of British Columbia (Vancouver) he returned to the Netherlands in 1956 where was appointed a professor of general and comparative linguistics in Utrecht. In his

introduction to general linguistics (1962) he elaborated a typology of constructions, and applied his views on language structure to the study of Dutch. De Groot departed from American structuralism in assigning an important role to meaning in language structure, and in studying meaning and form in combination. He was sensitive to the role of subjectivity in language structure and use. His analysis of constructions starts with sentences, the basic entities of speech. Sentences express the attitude of speakers towards themselves or things in the surrounding world. Words and word groups are parts of the sentence or constructions that abstractly refer to what is expressed in the sentence. De Groot left his mark on Dutch syntactic and morphological work, although in the 1960s his influence was overruled by generative grammar.

Major Works

(1949) Structurele syntaxis, The Hague: Servire.

(1962) Inleiding tot de algemene taalwetenschap. Tevens inleiding tot de grammatica van het hedendaagse Nederlands, Groningen: Wolters.

(1966) Betekenis en betekenisstructuur. Nagelaten geschriften van Prof.Dr. A.W. de Groot (posthumously published articles). Groningen: Wolters.

Further Reading

Bos, G.F. (1978) Introduction, in --- (ed.) A.W. de Groot. Die Hierarchie im System der Sprache, München: Fink, pp. 6-30 (introduction to De Groot's conceptions).

Kaldewaij, J. (1992) 'The syntax of two Dutch structuralists in its historical context', in J. Noordegraaf, K. Versteegh and K. Koerner (eds.) The History of Linguistics in the

Low Countries, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, pp. 305-327

Verburg, P.A. (1965) 'Albert Willem de Groot', Jaarboek van de Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde, pp. 66-74. (Biography and appraisal)

F. Vonk

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