INTERVIEW | *ENTREVISTA* | ENTREVISTA

PROLOGUE:

SAYING

SOMETHING

AN INTERVIEW WITH **DAVID BADE**∗

David Bade was born on a small farm in Illinois at the height of the Cold War. The rise of industrial agriculture meant that there was not enough income on the farm for it to support him and his brothers, so he went to the University of Illinois to study languages. Since a specific degree was required and he could not simply study languages, he decided to study Linguistics, thinking that it ought to have some relation to language. It sort of did, at least if you think that colourless green ideas sleep furiously. He studied the KiMeru tonal system in a field methods class and thus began a life long interest in language in Africa and language as song. Yet since he could not write a dissertation in verse, much less whistle like the Meru do, he took a job in a library where his linguistic oriented interests were amply satisfied and he continued to work in libraries until he was able to retire and return to the farm. While shearing sheep and mending fence, he continues to ponder the nature and meaning of birth, death, race, gender, a kind word, a smile, and the relationship between love and justice.

The are interviewers: **Adrian Pablé**, associate professor at the University of Hong Kong and the Secretary of the International Association for the Integrational Study of Language and Communication; **Sinfree Makoni**, Professor of Applied Linguistics and African Studies at Pennsylvania State University in the United States and Interim Director of African Studies at Pennsylvania State University; **Peter Jones**, a reader in Language and Communication in the Department of Humanities, *Sheffield* Hallam University; and **Cristine Severo**, associate professor at the Federal University of Santa Catarina/Brazil and CNPq Research Productivity Fellow 2. E-mails: apable@hku.hk; sinfreemakoni@hotmail.com; P.E.Jones@shu.ac.uk; crisgorski@gmail.com.

INTERVIEWERS (I): *Could you describe your own journey into integrationism and the impact this has had on your intellectual and professional life?*

DAVID BADE (DB): With the circulation of Chomsky's Pisa lectures in not-yet-published typescript in early 1979 and all of generative grammar brought under the reign of "move alpha", I abandoned a PhD in linguistics with the feeling that all of linguistics had become a ludicrous intellectual game completely alienated from anything that one could call important. "Government and Binding" certainly sounded to me like "Fascism and Torture"; had I been aware at that time of Harris's 1983 remark about Chomsky's 'fascist concept of languages if ever there was one' (HARRIS, 1983), I might have remained a student of linguistics. Instead, I set out on my own to study poetry, philosophy, cybernetics, Buddhism and Mongolian history, and it was not untill sometime in 1998 in a bookstore that I stumbled upon a trilogy of books by Roy Harris, picked up *The Language Machine* and read his "Epilogue: Saying Nothing". That was enough to turn my attention back to linguistics. Nevertheless, at that time I was in the middle of what would eventually be a 3 volume catalogue of books in African languages in the library at Northwestern University, and it was not untill that was finished in early 2002 that I once again stumbled upon another book by Roy Harris—*The Language Connection*—and finally sat down and read it in earnest. Over the next two years I read everything that I could find of his, finally writing to Harris in late 2004 and thereby initiating a correspondence which led to my first publications in linguistics – 27 years after leaving graduate school. It was by putting the language maker at the origin of language that I was finally able to make sense of so much that had perplexed me over the decades – from my childhood experiences with pentecostal christianity and its 'speaking in tongues' to the problems of communication in technical systems that was to occupy so much of my time during the decade 1997-2007, all the way to my then just completed 2002 study of the sources for the study of the Mongolian naval campaign to Jawa in the 13th century. It was not just linguistics that Harris seemed to open up, but philosophy, literature, historiography, science, computers, technical communication and religion; in fact just about all of the myths upon which our civilization is founded.

I: *Which concepts or discussions would you highlight as the core of integrationism?*

DB: The central revelation in Harris's work is that language is a product of language makers. I deliberately refer to this as a revelation because this is not something that one can discover by analyzing sound or text, nor by counting speech events, etc. Writers on language have for centuries taken language to be an object that one finds 'out there' and that one may examine as one examines rocks, trees, etc. What Harris realized was that language is natural in exactly the same way as are marriages, laws, art, savings banks, trade unions, road kill and watches; language is NOT natural in the same way as sunshine, rain, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, redwood trees and baby sharks. That is to say that language is a product of human activity and can only be understood from that perspective, while granting that human beings are but one among the many creatures that together make up what we call nature.

When William Paley famously argued that a watch found in nature will necessarily lead one to the assumption of a watchmaker because it is obviously the product of a design (and thus no accident), he failed to realize that no one could be led to the idea of design or a designer unless designers and their designs were already perfectly well known phenomena. No machine found alongside the road will ever be recognized as a machine unless the one examining it already knows what machines are. And in exactly the same manner marriages, laws, art and much else are products of human activity and can only be understood as such products; to eliminate the maker from consideration is to render such phenomena forever beyond comprehension. This is the point that Harris (1973) first grasped in *Synonymy and Linguistic Analyis*. There can be no analysis of linguistic artefacts unless one already understands them to be linguistic artefacts. An analysis must be based on what someone meant by those artefacts, but what someone meant can only be grasped from within the communication event itself. It follows from this realization that one cannot arrive at any notion of language based on sound in the environment or marks on a page; language can only be recognized as language by someone who already knows language as a language maker, and this includes the child who realizes that her gestures and sounds are taken as responses by those who are gesticulating and making sounds around her. No creature who does not make language can 'find' language 'out there'; only a language maker can do that because only a language maker can know *that there is language*.

I: ***What is the importance of Harris' books on Supercategories and why wasn't the reception among the members of the integrationist community a unanimously positive one?***

DB: I honestly cannot comment on the reception of Harris's writings of his last 15 years by his students and those interested in his earlier works since I have not read many responses to them. I do know that *The Semantics of Science*, *The Linguistics of History*, and *Language, Lexicography and the Law* were not well received by reviewers outside of linguistics, and there are various reasons for that. For the most part all of his 'supercategory' books seem to have been dismissed or ignored by all but integrationists, and as you note, some even among Harris's admirers have not appreciated them. I found all of them of great interest, but I can see why others would be put off by them. *The Linguistics of History*, for example, suffers from not really being that familiar with debates in historical writing of the past few decades, and for some that is sufficient reason to dismiss the book entirely. To put it simply, Harris was an outsider and dismissed as such without any serious effort to grapple with his arguments; arguments, of course, that readers would really have had to pursue at greater length in his earlier works. Other readers had no clue as to what Harris thought was at stake (e.g. C. Behan McCullagh), and that is the same problem that many linguists have had with all of Harris's writings.

Yet I think Harris really had to write those volumes, for what those books, individually and collectively, force the reader to grapple with is the very basic notion of reification and its implications for everything about which we wish to speak or write. And this draws us directly into the age old philosophical problems of realism versus nominalism, the problem of the nature of universals and categories, and "how language relates to the world". That is not just a matter of linguistic theory; it is a matter of everything we say or write. If indeed how language relates to the world is necessarily *how the speaker/writer relates the world*, then no discourse— scientific, digital, religious, philosophical or poetic – can give us the one and only "God's Truth" perspective on the world: everything remains forever up for debate between you and me and all those who come after us, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, words without end.

Nevertheless, while Harris (2009) suggests (in *After Epistemology*) that all language is reification, he does not mean that we cannot say what we mean nor that we cannot mean what we say, nor that we cannot speak about the real worlds of our experience. Harris steers a course between the scylla of the reifications of scientists and the charybdis of the relativists and postmodernists by insisting that we make language and that we make worlds with language, but that we do not make the world of the Other which stubbornly confronts us in all its reality and forces us to respond, as best we may, always needing to be ready to revise and restate and reposition ourselves depending upon what response we draw forth from the very real world within which we live.

The issue was actually put very clearly by the Russian philosopher N.O. Lossky in 1919. He made the integrationist argument *avant la lettre* in order to refute its "extreme nominalism":

> Extreme nominalists maintain that classes of things are bundles of individual phenomena which have become associated with *one and the same* name. Yet if the point of view of extreme nominalism be consistently adhered to , and the changing aspects of life be *exclusively* attended to, the question arises whether we are justified in speaking even of the *same* name. The name 'tiger' spoken or written by me yesterday and today is not one and the same word, but two different words: the intonation, the clearness of pronunciation, the intensity of the sound, the timbre of the voice, are sure to have been quite different yesterday from what they are to-day. We have to do with phenomena almost as different from one another as two real tigers that live in different forests or as two acts of representing them in consciousness. (LOSSKY, 1919)

Yet in his presentation of nominalism, Lossky slights the language maker and writes as if it is language itself that groups things in the world, arguing (on page 287) "The contention is that the grouping of things into classes is not in any way determined by the properties of the things themselves but is due to names. … If the grouping of things into classes is determined by names – understanding by a name not a universal element but something created afresh in every single act of utterance – how is it that a name is never associated with groups of heterogeneous things…?" Here the "grouping of things… is due to names", *not to our naming*. Whether it is categories or supercategories, for Lossky at least, the issue is "how language relates to the world" of heterogeneous things – *not* how we relate those things and choose to speak/write of them. For Harris this is not the issue at all, and this is what distinguishes integrationism from both realism and nominalism. While we would agree that our grouping of things into classes is indeed determined by the properties of the things themselves (at least if we are paying attention to them), from an

integrationist perspective the language we make in speaking of those intellectual acts of classification and grouping is, as Lossky noted in the previous passage, "not the same" from one utterance to another. The issue is not "how language relates to the world" but *how we relate the world*, the real world of our experience, when every utterance is indeed "created afresh in every single act." Supercategories are created and sustained by us through our attending to the real world and the language made by others around us. How we speak and write about any matters (singularities, categories, supercategories, past, present, future) either affirms a previous discourse or changes it: the decision as to how to understand and to relate the world is an every moment decision for all of us.

I: ***Recently the distinction has been introduced between moderate (or soft) integrationists and orthodox (or hard-core) integrationists, implying that the former are the way forward for linguistics. What is your stance when it comes to recognising different types of integrationism?***

DB: To think about the matter in terms other than *integrationisms* is much more appealing to me. And we can think about this issue in other terms, such as asking whether Harris's writings may have a positive influence on linguistics and other disciplines without all those inspired by his ideas having to become linguists or accepting his writings as Holy Writ (God forbid!). I am certain that were Harris still living and should he read everything that I have written, he would subject me to the same withering criticism that he directed at virtually everyone else whose writings he read. Would that then make me a soft integrationist, sort of like a Lakoff or McCawley in the 1970s, banished from the Party by the Master? There is absolutely no need to establish an orthodox integrationism nor to worry about integrationisms. I think the only good way forward will not be following Harris like puppies, but learning everything from him that we can learn, and integrating that with whatever we are able to learn elsewhere. There can be no predicting where such trajectories may lead, no matter what the area that we choose to explore. I will mention Tim Ingold as an example of one who has acknowledged a great debt to Harris (in private communication) and who has a great deal to offer his readers apart from any reference to Harris or Integrationism(s). In my own case I have found reading Harris in conjunction with Erik Hollnagel, Georges Canguilhem, Gilbert Simondon, Peter Janich and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy extremely rewarding, and not at all to the detriment of any one or the others.

If pressed, however, I think we can indeed find a shibboleth amongst those interested in Harris, but that will be a political rather than a linguistic matter. For those who want to remain within the world of science-since-Galileo, that world in which Laplace boasted that knowing the whole of it at any precise moment would provide a knowledge of the entire past and future of the universe (Big Data is Big Brother), Harris's insistence upon the indeterminacy of meaning is unacceptable: there must be determinacy all the way down. If the moderate integrationism which you mention is one in which the world can be described as a law-abiding system, accommodating Harris as much as it is deemed desirable, then I would argue that orthodox integrationism takes as its premise a radical indeterminism, the freedom of nature and the responsibility of nature's inhabitants for the world that they make together. That is to say that hard or soft integrationism depends on your politics: whether it is an indeterminate universe, with freedom and responsibility all the way up and all the way down; or a universe of scientific law and mathematical order, which we, by discovering those laws, may control as foolishly as Scientists or Führers, if not as wisely as Gods. On this issue, I am as hard as can be, in love with a world over which I would not rule even if I could. The world should not be remade in the image of my desires.

I: ***Looking forward, what do you see as the main priorities and challenges that integrationism faces in engaging with a wider audience?***

DB: My answer to this question of course follows directly from the position that I set forth in answer to the preceding question. If integrational theory is to be worth anyone's attention, it will have to keep its focus on the real world in which we live rather than on some theoretical fiction such as "the language organ," Merge, Pro, syntax, morphemes, text processing, dialects, supervernaculars, or whatever other entities linguists think that they find out there in the world. Linguistics as a discipline has obviously followed along the typical path of the harder sciences and the biosciences in seeking to understand language in order to create, imitate or control it in one fashion or another. The machine-generated language with which we are forced to deal in every online and many telephone encounters, the data-mining and marketing and spamming that we willingly or unwillingly inform with our emails and internet searching and online postings (Academia.edu, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) are all being produced deliberately to manipulate, control and enslave us. Shall our understanding of language and the science which pretends to study it be oriented by

such desires and directed by such goals? Should linguistics be a fascist enterprise in its theoretical foundations and orientations? It is precisely to this situation, our situation in the 21st century, dominated as it is by Big Science, Big Religion, Big Data, Big Money, Big Power and Big Lies, that our linguistics must respond. The indeterminacy of meaning and the responsibility of the language maker—speaker/writer and listener/reader—provide us with an assumption (we are free) and an orientation (we are responsible) that are essential for articulating an intellectual and political space for the exercise and the defence of our freedom as well as our obligations towards each other, both of these being of paramount importance to Harris. It is this philosophical basis that consistently underlies all of Harris's theoretical arguments and makes his work from beginning to end of urgent political importance. The challenge we face is how to keep that focus while building relations across disciplines rather than destroying all hope of open debate and communication by adopting an intellectual stance such as that which tragically alienated Harris from so many who could and perhaps would have learned as much from him as he might have learned from them. What might integrationism have become in Harris's own lifetime had Harris given his intellectual opponents as much consideration as he gave to the peasant in the Valle D'Aosta in 1967?

I: *How has integrationism shaped your views and practices as a farmer?*

DB: Well, that is an unexpected question, but is indeed relevant. Over the years I have thought a lot about human-animal relationships and human-animal communication. I grew up with a milk cow, chickens, sheep, cats and dogs, with an occassional raccoon, possum, snake, turtle etc. and always lamented the fact that while I could talk to them, they never gave a hoot about talking to me. Since returning to the farm in 2008 I have once again had all these and more, but now with my thoughts oriented by questions arising from an integrational perspective. I cannot really think of any practices that I do differently, but certainly what I pay attention to and what I notice has changed. Livestock auctions, for example, and how farmers negotiate prices by bidding on their own animals: if anyone becomes aware that you doing this, they are liable to stop bidding immediately. Or the big dealers bidding animals up when out of towners are at the market in order to discourage them from coming back, and by their presence upping the competition for the best animals. The auctioneer offering the first buyer a choice among a group of animals then saying "Well Mr Bade has purchased the black lamb so you still have the best of the lot to choose from!" In fact just about every aspect of the livestock market should present an integrationist (at least one with a knowledge of economic theories) an incredibly rich field for study.

Yet for me, far more fascinating than the communication among farmers and livestock buyers is the way animals relate to their fellow pasture mates – of the same or other species – and with me in the pasture, in the barn, and on the road when they get out and run away. How incredibly quickly they learn the significance *for them* of the sight or sound of the rustling of a feed bag or the banging of a bucket. They are unquestionably responding to these sights and sounds as significant features in their world. They clearly respond to my movements and the sounds I make, including talking to them ("Good morning my lovelies!"), but my cows never respond with "Madainn mhath!" even though they are Scottish Highland cattle, nor do my Black Welsh Mountain sheep greet me with "Bore da Dafydd!". What I have become keenly interested in –especially after reading about the experiences of the horse trainer Monty Roberts – is how animals communicate with each other, and how they attempt to communicate and negotiate relationships with human beings – for they certainly do. While linguists have for decades attempted to teach English or sign language to apes – with very little success – Roberts simply observed how horses establish and maintain relationships among the members of a herd, and he was able to respond with his own movements – neither with English nor with Cherokee verbalizations – in such a way as to integrate his actions with theirs and achieve in 30 minutes and no violence what traditional trainers took weeks or months to accomplish with great violence. Instead of looking for language in the animal kingdom Roberts learned how horses communicate and he now moves among them as one of their own! This seems to me to be of enormous significance to linguistics. The language we know is human language and is inextricably formed in and through and together with our social relationships and institutions; to look for that – language as we know it –in other species is anthropocentrism in its most flagrant form. As though apes would argue about same sex marriage if they could only speak English or some other language, or birds would build penthouses and planetariums and cathedrals and write about them in their own edition of *Architectural Digest* if they but had hands with which to build and to write. Animals do not communicate using anything resembling human language because their biomechanical, macrosocial and circumstantial situation is wholly different from that of human beings. If instead of looking for language in the non-human world we pay attention to the forms of communication that animals have developed amongst *themselves*, the forms of communication that are appropriate for *their* biomechanical, macrosocial and circumstantial

situation, we will surely learn much that we never even thought that we should be thinking about. Integrationist theory argues that we cannot understand human language except by considering it within human communicational practices, and I would argue that it is equally true that we will never understand animal communication by looking for language among moos and meows. So these days, as an integrationist herder, I pay close and constant attention to how animals communicate, to how they establish, negotiate and maintain their relationships with all the various species with whom they must live and interact, but I no longer lament that we cannot all sit down together and talk about Sinfree Makoni's latest book.

I: *What initial references would you recommend to those who want to initiate their readings on integrationism?*

DB: As mentioned above, I was introduced to integrationism with the Epilogue in *The Language Machine*, and having read most of Harris's writings since that initial foray, I still think it is one of his most brilliantly written and argued pieces. But in order to grasp what all was at stake in the Epilogue, one really has to back up and read *The Language Makers*, *The Language Myth* and the rest of *The Language Machine*. I found *Synonymy and Linguistic Analysis* very hard reading – the 1950-1960s analytical philosophy style I have always found unbearable – but by the end I was astounded at what he had accomplished; Harris himself later wrote to me that most of his basic ideas were already present in that volume although it still took many years for him to work out the implications. *Rethinking Writing* is perhaps the most powerful of his late writings, and draws together all the strands of his thinking in what is an excellent example of a very directed integrationist critique. I would also recommend the festschrift *Linguistics Inside Out: Roy Harris and His Critics*, both for the essays critically responding to Harris's writings as well as for Harris's response to those criticisms.

Apart from the writings of Harris himself, there are a number of works by his students as well as writings by some who discovered Harris long after he had retired from teaching and they had finished their PhDs. Chris Hutton's *Abstraction and Instance*, Michael Toolan's *Total Speech* and Talbot J. Taylor's *Mutual Misunderstanding* are all outstanding books by Harris's Oxford students. Many papers by Harris and his students from the 1980-1990s were collected in *Integrational Linguistics: A First Reader* (Language and Communication Library, Pergamon, 1998). Of the later generation, Harris (personal communication) regarded Peter Jones's essay "Value for money? Putting Marx through the mill" (2011) as an outstanding example of taking integrational linguistics "out of bounds", and I agree; furthermore, it is as much fun to read as Harris's "Epilogue: Saying Nothing." For a recent essay that directly confronts Harris's understanding of indeterminacy, there is Adrian Pablé's "Radical indeterminacy, idealism, realism: Benedetto Croce vs. Roy Harris" (2018) this being an example of pushing forward the most important element of Harris's philosophical dissent. In Sinfree Makoni's works such as those collected in *Language in Africa*, the political dimensions of integrationism are stressed within a context that never got Harris's attention: Africa. The 2015 volume published by IAISLC *Roy Harris and Integrational Linguistics 1956-2015* contains a complete bibliography of the writings of Roy Harris, an extensive though incomplete list of reviews of his books, and a thematically arranged bibliography of writings on integrationism and publications by integrationist oriented scholars.

One last comment, without your questions to prompt me: We speak because we have been spoken to. Let us speak that others might speak in their time, as they need, to make the world in which they live one which they can love without reservation.

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