MARTIN JOOS

On May 6, 1978, the Linguistic Society and the science to which it is dedicated lost a colleague and scholar who was one of the influential figures of the time—more influential than many of those who did not know him may realize. Martin Joos produced five major books, wrote more than twenty articles of importance, nearly as many reviews, and exercised lasting effects on a generation of students and fellow linguists.

Martin was born and grew up in the rural farming area of Wisconsin. The date of his birth was May 11, 1907, and he was one of ten children in the family of Alfred Joos. The family remained close throughout his life, and was a force guiding him toward his distinguished career in scholarship. During the first years of his life, moreover, he was bilingual in English and German; this experience developed first into an unusual ability for mastering languages, and later into deep devotion to linguistics. It is therefore a little surprising that his college education at the University of Wisconsin was in electrical engineering, rather than language; but like all technical skills that Martin acquired, his knowledge of electronics later was put into the service of linguistics. It was not until he spent a year as a field worker for the *Linguistic atlas of the United States and Canada* that he finally committed himself to the study of language. Thus, when he returned to the University of Wisconsin for graduate work, he left the field of engineering and took advanced degrees in German—remarkably enough, without having to complete his undergraduate prerequisites. After completing a dissertation on *Statistical studies of Gothic phonology*, he was appointed to a lectureship at the University of Toronto; at that institution, and at the University of Wisconsin, he served throughout his teaching career.

During World War II he served with the Signal Security Agency of the United States, using his language skills as a cryptanalyst, and his engineering skills in improving secret communication systems. For this service the War Department gave him its highest civilian award, a citation for distinguished service.

He returned to the academic world at the University of Wisconsin in 1946, eventually holding the posts of Professor of German and Chairman of the Department. During his service at Madison, he was a faculty member of seven Linguistic Institutes, and was a visiting professor in summer terms at the Universities of Alberta and Edinburgh. During the academic year 1958–59, he was a visiting professor at the University of Belgrade. In 1952–55, he served as the managerial editor of the program for the production of Spoken English textbooks for speakers of Eastern languages and of such little-studied European tongues as Serbo-Croatian. The program was sponsored by the ACLS, and was brought to a successful conclusion in large measure because of Martin's services both in adapting typographical resources for producing extremely difficult text, and because of his linguistic knowledge.

I have mentioned that Martin's relationships with his brothers, sisters, and parents were remarkably close and supportive. Those who were privileged to know him also

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know that his forty-year marriage to Jennie Mae Austin and his relationship to his adopted daughter Shari (now Mrs. Michael Valentine) were both equally close and devoted. Jennie Mae Joos is a registered nurse, and during many years she cared for Martin through increasing ill-health and deafness, just as he cared for her through difficulties with vision.

Martin's personality was one which often put off those who did not fully know him, but was also one that won him lifelong friends like Bernard and Julia Bloch, W. Freeman Twaddell, J Milton Cowan, and the present writer. As was remarked of him recently, he could not endure ignorance of a topic in which he was expert—a characteristic which led Bernard Bloch to say of him that, if you asked him the time of day, he might well give you a lecture on the history of time-pieces. Another Bloch anecdote springs from the fact that Martin was one of the last genuine polymaths. Bernard once said to his young son Walter, in exasperation at persistent questions, 'Nobody knows everything!' and received the reply, 'Not even Martin Joos?' Another side of him, however, was his wit—and something else very like it: an ability to throw light on a subject by a brief remark, as when he said to me, in a discussion on patterning, that it takes three trees to make a row.

I cannot hope to give a full evaluation of Martin's writings, which are briefly listed below. Yet I think it is important to point out that his *Five clocks* is the fullest account of the various styles and registers of English; that his *Middle High German courtly reader* contains the best directions for translation that I know; that his *English verb* is a pioneering work in description based on a stylistically unified and very extensive text; that his *Acoustic phonetics* educated a whole generation of linguists on that subject; and that his formulation of the application of simplicity to semantic interpretation, in the article 'Semantic axiom number one', is a tool which all students of meaning should use. In the words of the obituary prepared for him at the University of Wisconsin, 'Neither the man nor his work will be forgotten by those privileged to be his students and friends.'[1]

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[1] In preparing this obituary and bibliography, I have relied on an intimate account of Joos's life, written for the family by his brother Lothar A. Joos, and on *Martin Joos: an obituary*, prepared by a committee of the University of Wisconsin Faculty consisting of Murray Fowler, Cora Lee Nollendorfs, Sieghardt M. Riegel, John C. Street, and Lester W. J. Seifert, Chairman. The obituary will be published in *Monatshefte*. For the bibliography, I have used the list of published and unpublished works of Martin Joos, contained in a Festschrift issue of the *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* (11:2 [1972], pp. 85–9). In two instances where I have been unable to see what appears to be an entry for a formal publication, I have cited the entry number in the *CJL* list. I have, however, limited listing as far as possible to formal publications—to which I hope may be added the History of the LSA on which he and I collaborated, when it can be brought into final and publishable form.

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