

PAUL CAMPBELL AND LINGUISTICS AT PRINCETON

After nearly forty years as a banker in Wall Street, except for four years in the Navy as skipper of a DE in the north Atlantic and the Mediterranean, Paul retired at age sixty to continue his education. Always a sailor, he and Julie took delivery in 1972 in England of the 51 foot yawl "Julie" and spent several seasons cruising in European waters. Bringing her back to the U. S., with headquarters in Greenwich, they have spent many months of each year since then living aboard and cruising the Atlantic coast from the Caribbean to Maine. They are now settled in Trappe, Maryland, keeping "Julie" in Oxford on the Tred Avon River.

With so much time behind the wheel to think, Paul decided there was a lot in this world he was missing and so began a period of going back to college - taking courses at Princeton and even at Yale (closer to Greenwich), especially in anthropology and archaeology, writing papers and doing lots of reading. The power and beauty of language has always fascinated him, including the influence that a language's efficiency (ease with which it can be learned and used) has on human development and in the competition between cultures. Lately, he has been auditing Paul Volcker's lectures at Princeton.

Paul reports that his new involvement with the academic world has exposed him to some of the inner workings of the University and has given him a taste of what an academic life would be like. He has found it extremely stimulating and rewarding.

About six years ago he began working with Professor Freiden at Princeton to help build up the Program in Linguistics. One of the important and overlooked purposes of language, he feels, in addition to the expression of thoughts and feelings and to influencing the actions of others, is to analyze and organize thoughts in your own brain, which is where everything has to start. The capacity to learn and to use language is genetically programmed in every human being, and to make full use of that capacity is to become a more effective individual. That is the purpose of Linguistics - a study of the structure of language and how it can be used.



Master Mariner

It has been pointed out that Leonardo da Vinci studied human anatomy in order to paint more faithfully, and Michelangelo even used dissection to understand the forces inside the body that mold the human form. So Linguistics studies the anatomy of language, as it is constantly evolving, in order to enable one to speak and write effectively.

Although important courses are now offered at Princeton, Linguistics is not yet a regular department at the University, as Paul and others think it should be. The following excerpts are paraphrases from a recent statement by Professor Robert Freiden, chairman of the Linguistics Program on aspects of this discipline.

Linguistics at Princeton

“Language is a uniquely human phenomenon and the foundation of civilization. Linguistics is the study of the history, structure, acquisition and use of language. It involves the structure of words and of sentences, sound patterns, and the meaning of words and sentences (semantics). Linguists have developed a view of language as a computational system, unique among human capacities. While the structure of a language is highly complex, a child acquires it automatically and uniformly, and without explicit instruction, in contrast to reading and writing, which have to be taught.

“In the courses given, students become aware of what has been learned about the structure of language and

what this reveals about the workings of the mind. The study of basic linguistic principles forces the brain to organize thoughts and articulate them clearly. It also facilitates the learning of other languages.

“The Linguistics Program at Princeton complements other disciplines in the University, such as philosophy, psychology, anthropology, sociology, the studies of languages and literatures, and the production of computer models of language learning and translation.

“For all of the above reasons, Linguistics at Princeton should become a regular department, offering an undergraduate major, and eventually a small graduate program.”



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