Laudation of Peter Bosch

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Dear colleagues, dear Peter,

it was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation to present one of this year's Lotze prize winners, viz., Peter Bosch. I will start this laudation by briefly sketching the main steps in his career, skipping over a lot of detail:

After reading linguistics and philosophy in Berlin and Oxford, Peter Bosch obtained his MA degree from the TU Berlin in 1974, his PhD from the Ruhr-Universität Bochum in 1980, and his Habilitation degree from the Universität Osnabrück in 1992. Between 1975 and 1988, he was a researcher and Reader at the universities of Nijmegen and Tilburg in the Netherlands. Then he worked until 2000 for IBM Germany as a manager in research, development, and services, from 1994 on as the Director of the Institute for Logic and Linguistics at the Scientific Centre of IBM Germany in Heidelberg. (By the way, I was a member of his group in Heidelberg, and these years have had a profound influence on my own career and development as a scientist.) In 2000, Peter Bosch became Full Professor of Computational Linguistics and Cognitive Science at the University of Osnabrück.

Peter Bosch is a distinguished scholar in the field of Language and Cognition. His research promoted the fundamental insight that human language cannot function independently of other cognitive capacities. It shows how linguistic phenomena can be modelled in a more precise and adequate way if one takes into account the interaction of linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge as well as the interplay between linguistic and other nonlinguistic cognitive capacities.

From the very beginning of his scientific career, he has adopted a highly interdisciplinary approach, and, mind you, he started out in a time when this stance was not yet trendy. So if it is a matter of course today for researchers from different backgrounds, e.g., humanities, computer science, psychology, AI, and neurology, to collaborate in research on linguistic phenomena, if 'interdisciplinarity' is all the rage today and an almost indispensable ingredient in research proposals, this is due to the work of pioneers in the field like him. He has promoted interdisciplinary research in the field both as a researcher and as an administrator, e.g., as a manager at the IBM Scientific Centre in Heidelberg, as the speaker of the graduate college 'Adaptivity of hybrid cognitive systems' or, in particular, as one of the founding fathers of the Institute of Cognitive Science at the University of Osnabrück.

Peter Bosch has contributed to a wide range of topics in the field, in the domains of semantics, Computational Linguistics in general, Cognition and Philosophy of Language. Rather than enumerating his publications exhaustively, I will just present the major foci of his research activities.

To my mind, the most important one of them is *reference* in natural language. Peter Bosch has investigated a wide range of referential expressions in his work, e.g., definite NPs, demonstrative and personal pronouns. He investigated the way in which linguistic reference come about in the process of semantic composition, and how the referents are identified in concrete contexts. In a number of papers that report on theoretical considerations as well as psycholinguistic experiments, he has shown the influence of conceptual knowledge, while it turned out that visual salience has only a minor effect on this identification. Another very interesting area of research in the domain of reference is devoted to the relation between anaphora and presupposition. Peter Bosch has been working on this topic throughout his career and has presented the results of his work in many publications and talks.

Another core area of his research is *lexical semantics*, in particular, the semantic underspecification of linguistic expressions (e.g., ambiguity or vagueness). In a number of papers, Peter Bosch has described in detail the role of context (which includes linguistic context as well as general world and encyclopaedic knowledge) and general pragmatic reasoning in the specification of such underspecified semantic representations, which disambiguates ambiguous expressions as a by-product. This work has contributed to our understanding of the semantic interfaces to pragmatics and conceptual knowledge and can also be fruitfully applied to nonlinguistic puzzles like the Sorites Paradox.

Further foci of his research include *Information Structure* (in particular, focus, topic, and presupposition), and *Language Technology*.

Peter has been a key figure in a number of research projects, I will just mention the Verbmobil project, whose vision was automatic translation of spoken dialogues in German, English, and Japanese, and a project on the comprehension of referential expressions, which was part of the ESF-founded project 'Communication in Context'.

Last but not least, Peter is also well known for his editorial activities, in particular, for the *Journal of Semantics*. He was one of its co-founders and was its managing editor for 20 years (1985-2004). However, he is also involved in other journals, e.g., as a board member of *Research on Language and Computation* and *Semantics & Pragmatics*.