

Of course, a collection of nine papers can at best circumscribe some of the problems literary studies will continue to face in the next decade. Despite all cultural, social and scholarly boundaries, which very often make themselves felt much more harshly than communities do, the contributors to this farewell issue (who come from Taiwan and Australia, Canada, Poland, France, The Netherlands and Germany) demonstrate how literary studies can be improved when we focus our interest not only on isolated literary texts but on human beings doing things with texts in their social and cultural contexts. Their ideas and criticism will certainly be put on the agenda of empirical studies of literature in the nineties.

## The hypothesis of the polyvalence convention: A systematic survey of the research development from a historical perspective \*

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This survey of the development of research on the hypothesis of the polyvalence convention first relates the history of the concept of polyvalence from its beginnings as a normative defining characteristic of 'literariness' up to its pragmatization as an empirical hypothesis of convention; in this context, problems concerning the empirical versus analytic-prescriptive status of the hypothesis and possible solutions to the related problem of valuation within an ESL are discussed. Next, studies testing the empirical validity of the hypothesis for recipients are reported on the basis of further theoretical differentiations; altogether the studies support a 'weak' version of the hypothesis and indicate the need to assume a differential validity. Going beyond the validity for recipients, open questions requiring further research in relation to explanation, applications on both the sociological and individual level, and historical as well as spatial qualifications are pointed out, which serve at the same time to demonstrate the stimulating potential of the hypothesis. Finally, quantitative indicators for assessing the theoretic-empirical effectiveness of hypotheses are suggested and illustrated, using the hypothesis of the polyvalence convention as an example.

### 1. Goals and procedure of analysis

The hypothesis of the polyvalence convention (PC) constitutes one of the central assumptions within the Empirical Study of Literature (ESL) in more than one respect: in the first place, it has played an essential part in the process of establishing the ESL; in this function it has evoked particularly intensive theoretical discussion as well as empirical research. On the object-theoretical level it is (together with the 'aesthetics convention': AEC) relevant for the definition of (non-)literariness; developments within the object-domain thus turn almost immediately into problems for the hypothesis, for instance in relation to the status of literature within a context of (increasing) diversity of the media and the possibly related phenomena of historic change

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(of aesthetic conventions, etc.). As a consequence, the hypothesis of PC is optimally suited for demonstrating the efficacy and the progress of ESL as well as its problems and questions in need of further research.

Considering the complexity as well as the differentiation of these problems, we cannot possibly present and discuss the entire research development relating to the hypothesis of PC within the (necessarily restricted) framework of this paper. We hence must and wish to concentrate on merely stating the most important aspects, results, and problems of this research development; in this process we do, however, at least attempt to systematically structure this area from a historical perspective. At the same time this attempt is intended (and in our opinion suitable) as a farewell to the long-time, now departing, editor of *Poetics* (S.J. Schmidt), the hypothesis of PC undoubtedly constituting one of the most important contributions S.J. Schmidt has made to ESL. Furthermore, the research history of this hypothesis is able to demonstrate the breadth as well as depth of S.J. Schmidt's theoretic-empirical effectiveness in this area – *Poetics* during the past ten years having been one of the central organs for the publication of empirical results (as regards journals). During the time of his editorship S.J. Schmidt certainly has established the acceptance of empirical work by *Poetics* even more strongly; for this reason, we will give empirics its due attention at the end of this farewell by suggesting quantitative indicators for the assessment of the theoretic-empirical effectiveness of hypotheses within research history and illustrating our procedure, taking for our example the hypothesis of PC.

## 2. From defining characteristic to the hypothesis of convention

*Normative defining characteristic:* As a concept, 'polyvalence' has of course existed prior to the establishment of an ESL, the work of S.J. Schmidt (stemming from the background of text linguistics and philosophical aesthetics respectively) again playing an important part (cf. for instance 1971, 1972). At first, however, 'polyvalence' was mostly taken to be a – normative – defining characteristic of literariness in the structural sense that 'polyfunctionality' was regarded as characteristic of literary texts which were postulated to be 'abstracting from situations', that is 'semantically underdetermined, functionally overspecified, as well as pseudo-referential' (1972: 70). 'Polyvalence' then constitutes the complement on the reader's side to the textual characteristic of 'polyfunctionality', i.e. the poly-perspective constitution of meaning by the recipient (1972: 67f.); on the level of scientific textual analysis, 'polyfunctionality' of the text results in polyinterpretability, which is likewise to be regarded as a complement of the latter. The introduction of all three complementary concepts contained a strongly normative component, such as in postulating the poly-perspective to be the only aesthetically

adequate constitution of meaning (1972: 68). What this normative understanding in fact implies is that the triad of 'polyfunctionality – polyvalence – polyinterpretability' was regarded as the defining characteristic of 'literariness'. This, however, has always been somewhat at odds with the simultaneous attempt to supersede the essentialist concept of text within the hermeneutic-phenomenological literary theory and to replace it with a 'functional' concept of text: i.e. the conceptual consequence that texts as units of meaning exist only in and by means of a living consciousness (Groeben 1972: 159ff.; Schmidt 1984: 312). Hence, Schmidt today uses the concept of 'Kommunikat' to designate the 'text-in-function', which refers to the text that has been communicated to and been given meaning by the recipient.

Groeben (1977/80) resolved the resulting tension by regarding the triad of 'polyfunctionality – polyvalence – polyinterpretability' as the core assumption of the empirical conceptualization of the study of literature (in the sense of the non-statement view of theories) and at the same time providing theoretic-empirical justifications for the usefulness (including the normative sense) of this assumption: in particular the systematic-methodological justification which conceptualizes literary texts as the integration of the partially contrary poles of (among others) indeterminacy and determinacy; and the empirical support from experimental aesthetics (such as Berlyne's) which also implies the integration of two antagonistic processes ('reward' and 'aversion'; 1980: 30ff.). Schmidt then, in his *Foundations of an Empirical Science of Literature* (I; 1980), completed the pragmatization implied in the functional concept of text by specifying the two conventions of the AEC and the PC. The AEC (1980: 92) claims that participants in our society who engage in communication of an aesthetic nature neglect the fact convention (reference to models of reality which are considered to be valid; 1980: 89), and that this constitutes mutual knowledge and acts as a mutual expectation. In an exact parallel, the PC (1980: 106f.) assumes the invalidation of the monovalence convention (striving for unambiguous, intersubjectively fixed reception results; 1980: 106) for all relevant action roles in the literature system (i.e. producers, recipients, mediators, and post-processors of 'literature'). The central concept of 'polyvalence' as the 'result of communicative actions which are directed by the PC' is then stated as follows: 'If a participant in a communication C in a communicative situation CSit realizes a KOMMUNIKAT BASE KB presented to him as an AESTHETIC KOMMUNIKAT AEK, he is then able (or believes himself to be able) to attribute to the KB of AEK in the course of one communicative action or several successive communicative actions reception results on one level or on *n* levels which he respectively deems satisfactory/rates as optimal' (1980: 107f.). Since then (within the ESL), not only members of the NIKOL-group (around S.J. Schmidt), but also practically everybody working within this paradigm or subjecting it to (critical) discussion has referred to this conception of a

polyvalence convention (cf. for instance Cupchik 1988; Defonso 1986; Halász 1989). Because Schmidt in his above formulation of the PC specifies its application to reception results in particular, the discussion by other authors, although broad in scope, has likewise tended to concentrate on this aspect (at the expense of for instance the other action roles within the literature system).

*Theoretical specification of the PC:* One of the problems that has not yet been resolved in a satisfactory manner concerns the relation between the AEC and the PC. Schmidt at first holds that the application of the 'AEC creates the conditions for the application of the PC' (1980: 110). This may also be understood in the sense of an empirical-contingent relation; later, however, he clearly states the relation in a more analytical manner: 'The AEC is logically prior, makes polyvalent readings possible in the first place, is hence superordinated to the PC and comprises it' (cf. Schmidt 1989a; Schmidt and Groeben 1989; Meutsch and Schmidt 1985; see also Meutsch 1989). Thus, the relation between AEC and PC has not yet been sufficiently worked out, as may also be seen from the discussion in the literature. The superordination of the AEC over the PC for 'logical' reasons and the PC being 'comprised' by the AEC can clearly not mean that the (empirical) validity of the AEC logically implies that of the PC; especially the problem of censorship is not infrequently (among other reasons) due to assuming the AEC to be valid, while at the same time upholding the monovalence convention (cf. the discussion relating to the literary and the legal system: for instance Barsch 1984, 1985; cf. section 4 below). Quite in general one might reasonably claim that the *hypotheses* logically follow from each other; in relation to the object of these hypotheses (i.e. the conventions) this claim does, however, not appear to make much sense. At this point it is therefore necessary to state more precisely what exactly is meant by 'logical priority' or should be meant respectively. In addition, this serves to fundamentally raise yet again the problem of the (quasi-)analytical or empirical status of the hypothesis of the PC, which has led to quite controversial discussions during the past ten years. Previously, by conceptualizing polyfunctionality, polyvalence, etc. as defining characteristics of 'literariness', valuation had taken place on the level of scientific concept explicitation; now, in the course of the above consistent pragmatization, valuation has for all practical purposes been reduced to the status of 'object' (as it has in fact been proposed for other, more concrete concepts of text types, such as 'light fiction': cf. Kreuzer 1967) – and in fact this is precisely what the consistent pragmatization in the sense of postulating an empirical hypothesis of the polyvalence convention means above all. The empirical hypothesis of the PC claims that polyvalence constitutes a value for the participants in the literature system – and this empirical claim may of course prove false. Falsifiability, as Kindt (1981; cf. also Ibsch 1985) has forcefully demanded, must of course be possible, if the

empirical status of the hypothesis is meant seriously – keeping in mind that a potential lack of validity need not necessarily mean no validity at all, but possibly a validity subject for instance to context or limited temporal factors (Kindt 1981; cf. also Kramaschki 1992).

This, however, raises the problem of what happens to the evaluative perspective on the intersubjective-scientific level. Here, the most radical solution consists in the 'prohibition' of such intersubjective-scientific value judgements, as it has been practiced within the 'Postulate of Value-Freedom' (PVF) of the classic-empiricist philosophy of science (since Weber: cf. Albert 1968). (Methodo-)Logically this is of course possible; it does, however, quickly lead to an undesirable relativism, as for example the relationship already mentioned between the literature and the legal system shows: if for instance a representative of the literature system (be it author, publisher, or mediator) were to claim that a literary text was in fact not designed for the 'monovalent' reception a public prosecutor regards as 'correct', the ESL upholding the PVF would be able to intervene only by providing data supporting the validity of the PC in a specific society at a specific point in time; in this situation, the public prosecutor, depending on the opinion of the (majority? of the) participants, would be regarded as 'right' or 'wrong' – and if, after a certain period of time, the opinion (of the majority?) were to change, it would be the prosecutor's opponent who would be thought 'right' or 'wrong' respectively. Relying on the 'conventional' insight of the (majority of) participants in the literature system in questions of censorship will, however, not be regarded as a particularly sensible procedure by most researchers within the study of literature; as a consequence, the PC is not infrequently – even within the framework of ESL – understood in a 'normative' sense after all as the explication of literariness (cf. below). If, however, one does after all interpret the hypothesis of PC in a normative sense, the PC no longer constitutes an empirical (falsifiable) hypothesis, but a (prescriptive) analytical definition (cf. the criticism by Linder 1990; Werber 1990). If one wishes to maintain an autonomous literary-theoretical valuation within an ESL, there are – in our opinion – thus only two possibilities: one can either specify a literary-theoretical valuation independently of the AEC and the PC, or one can conceptualize the direction of valuation contained in the conventions as 'scientific-objective' – in this case, however, these valuations will have to be justified on the basis of additional, such as effect-related, reasons going beyond the conventions themselves. If one does not wish to go back from the achievement of the specification of empirical hypotheses (of convention) to the postulate of prescriptive-analytical defining characteristics, ESL will have to elaborate the three possibilities in greater detail and possibly come to a decision on this basis: empiricist PVF, definition of literariness independently from the conventional valuations as the object of empirical study, or taking up the direction of valuation contained in the conventions in

combination with additional empirical justification.

*Embedding the conventions in a nomological network:* Even at this point, however, the metatheoretical problems relating to the explicitation of the theory are by no means exhausted. In the context of a differentiated analysis of the concept of 'convention', Fokkema (1989) has called attention to the fact that 'convention' is first of all merely a sociological concept. As a consequence, phenomena on the individual level can lead to logical paradoxes of the following kind: For an individual recipient (and his/her socialisation), a monovalent reception of a text (cf. Linder 1990; also Barsch 1991) might well constitute a 'personally satisfying' communication result (cf. in greater detail section 3 below) and thus (on the overindividual-sociological level) correspond to the PC. If, however, the (individual) flouting of the PC constitutes positive evidence for its (overindividual) validity, this conclusion contains a (logically) paradoxical component which must be resolved for instance by distinguishing between object- and meta-level. In addition, there is also the possibility of pragmatic paradoxes which Fokkema (1989: 1, 13) names explicitly: Thus it is, for instance, characteristic of the aesthetic area of life, that conventions are, and are in fact meant to be, flouted. This raises the problem of how a flouting of the PC is to be evaluated – as an innovation or its opposite? Here lies the necessity for the specification and empirical research on even more general conventions and norms than has so far been the case for the two 'macro-conventions' postulated by Schmidt (1989a: 329). At this point, ESL's work in the area of the explicitation of theory will have to include not only the distinction between macro- and micro-conventions, but also between potential meta- and super-conventions.

In the long run the relation to the concepts of polyfunctionality and polyinterpretability, which were originally conceived of as complements, will also have to be worked out in greater detail. Indirectly Schmidt includes these concepts in his hypothesis of the PC, insofar as the convention is meant to apply to all action roles distinguished by Schmidt (cf. above; cf. also Hintzenberg et al. 1980); thus, polyfunctionality of a literary text can be regarded as the result of the actions of producers of literature who follow the PC (the same applies to polyinterpretability for scientific post-processors and mediators of literature). This would result in a new starting-point on the textual side for the justification and 'adequacy' of polyvalence within the reception process – a perspective which Schmidt and his co-workers have so far mostly excluded because of their radical-constructivist concentration on text reception and processing.

Last but not least the problem of how to interpret a potential falsification of the empirical hypothesis of the PC must also be dealt with: might such a falsification be taken to indicate a historical change having occurred in the (self-)organization of the literature system? And does not this possibility itself already suggest that the hypothesis of the PC constitutes merely the

explicitation of a historically and spatially specific aesthetics (cf. Jendricke 1988, Kramaschki 1992) which can and must be confronted with alternative aesthetic conceptions (cf. section 4 below)? One might draw the conclusion that the empirical research on the aesthetic conventions in our literature system cannot count as sufficient until competing hypotheses relating to possible alternative conventions have been put forward and detailed.

### 3. Theoretic-empirical differentiation and empirical validation (for recipients)

*Theoretic-empirical differentiation:* For the reasons already mentioned, the theoretical discussion as well as the empirical research on the PC have mostly concentrated on its relevance to the area of reception processes. In this context Groeben (1982a,b, 1983) has critically remarked that particularly the definition of polyvalence (quoted above, p. 7) suggests that a (single) literary text is given a polyvalent constitution of meaning by one individual recipient. This seems like a relatively strong definition of the concept of 'polyvalence', to which Groeben opposes a weak alternative, which concentrates on interindividual differences of constitutions of meaning by different recipients. This weak version is both in agreement with the theoretical conceptualization of 'convention' as a sociological concept and with the empirically supported tendency of individual recipients to 'normalize' the meaning of the text (cf. Steinmetz 1974). Further differentiations are of course possible on the basis of whether the various (intra- and inter)individually coherent constitutions of meaning are generated simultaneously or at different points of time (Groeben 1983: 232). Among these, so Groeben claims, the weak version appears to be more suitable to act as a 'convention', even though undoubtedly there also exist particularly competent (for instance scientific) recipients who do in fact realize the strong version. Schmidt and the NIKOL-group have largely agreed to this differentiation (cf. Schmidt 1984; also Barsch 1984, 1985; Hauptmeier 1983; Meutsch 1989; Kramaschki 1992); the same applies to the reception outside the NIKOL-group (cf. for instance Defonso 1986; Früh 1983; Beaugrande 1989).

Ibsch (1988) has, however, within an empirical study drawn attention to the fact that there furthermore also exist possibilities of transitions between these two versions, such as the acceptance (or tolerance, respectively) of different meaning constitutions of a text within one's own (intra)individual text reception. In addition, her research design also contains the distinction between the process of meaning constitution and the (final) result of this process, her study on the hypothesis of convention focusing on the aspect of the product/result. Yet another relevant dimension – the perspective of sequence – was raised by Cupchik and then taken up by Ibsch (cf. de

Beaugrande 1989: 20f.): depending on whether different constitutions of the meaning of a literary text are maintained simultaneously or consecutively at different times, even more versions of 'polyvalence' become possible and must be distinguished. The theoretical discussion of Schmidt's hypothesis of convention has thus in a way generated dimensions which can and ought to be used for purposes of differentiation in the explicitation of 'polyvalence'. Against the background of the present state of the discussion (at least) the following dimensions can be distinguished: number of persons: intra- vs. interindividual; perspective of generation vs. acceptance/tolerance; single point of time vs. several points of time; perspective of process vs. product/result. However, not all of the factor combinations which are logically possible also make sense. Thus it would, for instance, be relatively pointless to specify 'polyvalence' in the sense of 'interindividual acceptance of different processes at different points of time' – interindividual acceptance being of necessity, considering the difficulty of access to thought processes in interaction, limited to products. As a consequence, we would in the following like to make a suggestion for the explicitation of the theory by naming those factor combinations which appear to be useful for a more precise differentiation of the hypothesis of PC; the combinations will be given in the order of the 'strength' of the concept of polyvalence that is implied respectively.

1. One person generates different products at one point of time.
  2. One person generates different processes at one point of time.
  3. One person generates different products at different points of time.
  4. One person accepts different products at one point of time.
  5. One person accepts different products at different points of time.
  6. Several persons generate different products at one point of time.
  7. Several persons generate different processes at one point of time.
  8. Several persons generate different products at different points of time.
  9. Several persons accept different products at one point of time.
  10. Several persons accept different products at different points of time.
- This ranking rests first of all on the assumption that the perspective of generation vs. acceptance constitutes the most important indicator for the 'strength' of polyvalence, generation of either different products or processes of meaning constitution implying a 'stronger' concept of polyvalence than does the acceptance of processes or products (cf. Ibsch 1988). As regards the remaining three dimensions, the intraindividual generation or acceptance is ranked higher than the interindividual generation or acceptance under recourse to Groeben's differentiation of a strong and a weak version of polyvalence (cf. Groeben 1982a,b, 1983). Likewise, the product perspective is taken to indicate a stronger concept of polyvalence than the process perspective (cf. Ibsch 1988); and finally the realization of any of these dimensions of polyvalence at one point of time can count as 'stronger' than their realization at different, consecutive points of time (cf. de Beaugrande 1989).

These different (potential) operationalizations of 'polyvalence' do in their turn of course imply different operationalizations of the hypothesis of PC. Empirical research on the hypothesis of the PC in particular has suffered from the fact that so far an explicit operationalization of the concept of polyvalence used has only rarely been given; as a consequence, the various empirical indicators that have been studied differ considerably, and their integration into a conclusion as to the validity of the hypothesis of PC presents great difficulties (cf. below). To make matters even more complicated, the quantitative dimension which is given a constitutive position by the (partial) concept of 'poly-', in fact constitutes merely the surface structure of the hypothesis of polyvalence: According to Schmidt, the PC manifests itself above all in that recipients of literary texts 'carry out individually optimal constitutions of meaning' and can contribute structuring abilities, individual experience, interests, etc. (Schmidt 1980: 102). Schmidt, however, does clearly not regard this 'assumption of optimization' (cf. Hauptmeier and Schmidt 1985: 83) as the contingent cause of the various quantitative aspects of 'polyvalence' distinguished above; hence we suggest regarding this assumption of optimization as the 'qualitative deep structure', so to speak, in relation to the 'quantitative surface structure' of the concept of polyvalence. This, however, raises the problem that when testing the hypothesis of PC, either the quantitative surface structure or the qualitative deep structure can serve as a starting point; in addition, further hypotheses about contingent (personal) conditions and consequent effects can be derived from the latter (cf. below). In any case, the problems within the theoretical discussion of the hypothesis of PC demonstrate the importance of a differential and precise discussion of operationalizations in empirical studies of validation in order to be able to unambiguously – in the sense of theory-driven research – refer the results achieved in such studies back to the starting hypothesis.

*Empirical validation of the quantitative surface structure:* For the reasons given above, the empirical studies conducted so far can be separated into two groups on the basis of the kinds of indicators used respectively: studies which test the validity of the hypothesis of PC relatively directly on the 'quantitative surface'; and studies which – for instance on the basis of the assumption of optimization – employ more indirect indicators (such as moderating variables on the side of the recipients, further dependent variables connected with 'polyvalence', etc.; cf. below). The various separate studies themselves, however, are of course not limited to one of the categories of indicators. This also applies to the classic (first) study by Meutsch and Schmidt (1985) who investigate the actual process of Kommunikat-construction (PKC). After presenting a model of 'polyvalent' PKC, the authors start out with formulating the following hypotheses: Hypothesis 1: In reading literary texts, problems of comprehension will occur (operationalization of problems of comprehension: negative descriptions and comments). The two following hypotheses

test relatively direct indicators: Hypothesis 2: Polyvalent PKCs manifest themselves in changes of frames of reference (operationalization: changes of frames of reference (as the result of applying a convention)); Hypothesis 3: Changes of frames of reference are positively evaluated (operationalization: (a) positive correlation between changes of frames of reference and positive comments, (b) comparison of positive correlations and negative comments – (b) constituting an indirect indicator). The fourth hypothesis raises the question of interactions with text types and thus offers a more indirect indicator of the validity of the PC: Non-narrative literary texts evoke more polyvalent PKCs than do narrative literary texts (operationalization: comparison of two texts – narrative vs. non-narrative – as to (a) number of negative descriptions and comments, (b) height of the positive correlation between changes of frames of reference and positive comments). The fifth hypothesis concerning the relation between the PC and the AEC is not relevant in the context of this paper.

The study employed the method of 'thinking aloud' (for a reception 'sentence by sentence'). In this way, Hypothesis 1 could be confirmed, likewise Hypothesis 2 (mean number of changes of frames of reference: 2.76) and Hypothesis 3 (highly significant correlation of 0.51 between changes of frames of reference and sum of all positive comments); the correlation between changes of frames of reference and sum of all negative comments, however, also turned out to be highly significant. In relation to Hypothesis 4, the difference between narrative and non-narrative texts (in terms of number of changes of frames of reference) was highly significant; the comparison of correlations between positive comments and changes of frames of reference, however, did not lead to the predicted results. Providing the validity of the operationalizations used, this study clearly yields positive evidence for an (at least partial) confirmation of the hypothesis of PC for the *process* of meaning constitution.

Ibsch (1988) also reports a confirmation of the hypothesis of PC, but – in contrast to Meutsch and Schmidt – in relation to the aspect of acceptance for which she provides a theoretical elaboration which is then tested in a first pilot study. The two central hypotheses were: (1) Once the comprehension process has come to an end, subjects commit themselves to a single interpretation; (2) at the same time they do, however, tolerate polyvalent attributions of meaning by other recipients. A testing of these hypotheses with a sample of 34 students of literature and 5 poems largely yielded a confirmation of both hypotheses, the interindividual tolerance of polyvalence amounting to 40%.

Broadly speaking, this is also the place for reporting those studies which provide evidence in favor of interindividually differing constitutions of meaning, but only under recourse to the concept of polyvalence, not to the hypothesis of PC itself. This

applies for instance to the volume on Musil's 'Hasenkatastrophe' edited by Groeben (1981) as well as to the study conducted by Hömberg and Rossbacher (1981) on Meckel's 'Der Zünd'; being only of limited relevance in this context, we will not present these studies in detail for reasons of limitations of space.

The study by Steen (1990) on cognitive processes in the reception of metaphors occupies a transition point between direct and indirect types of indicators. He also employs the method of 'thinking aloud' in relation to texts which are presented as 'literary' to one group of subjects and as 'non-literary' to another. Steen here postulates three kinds of manifestations of the (polyvalent) understanding of metaphors: more than one analogy; interpretation of the vehicle rather than the theme; contextual interpretation. Protocols of 'literary reception' did indeed turn out to be longer than those of 'non-literary reception' (the relationship holding within texts as well). Whereas more than one analogy was only rarely generated, interpretations of the vehicle as well as the theme did occur and up to 25% of the metaphors were contextually interpreted. This constitutes – at least indirect – evidence against the 'strong' version of the hypothesis of PC, while at the same time not limiting the validity of the hypothesis to the ('weak') acceptance of different constitutions of meaning generated by others (for the theoretical interpretation of the results cf. also the model in Steen 1989).

Meutsch, while also employing the method of 'thinking aloud' (for instance 1989), has tended to favor written summaries and interpretations which are then categorized (for instance 1984, 1987), generally in combination with the design of presenting a text as 'literary' to one group of subjects and as 'non-literary' to another. For the most part Meutsch has concentrated on the micro-analysis of the process of meaning constitution, the indicators tested comprising direct as well as indirect ones (as in the case of the paradigmatic study by Meutsch and Schmidt 1985 described above): In 1984 he put forward the hypothesis that in a literary context reading problems will more frequently lead to non-specific elaborations on the basis of general world knowledge, while in a non-literary context a greater number of specific textual inferences are expected to occur. This hypothesis could be confirmed by means of a propositional analysis of subjects' summaries of the texts (on the basis of content-analytic categorizations of the propositions). In 1987, Meutsch carried out another test of the indicators 'content elaborations with alternative frames of reference' and 'cognitive elaborations – polyvalent', in which he also included 'metacognitive' and 'metatextual elaborations', the latter referring to cognitions containing signals specific to literature (such as knowledge of literary text types etc.; 1987: 54). The results are similar to those obtained by Meutsch and Schmidt 1985, including metacognitive/metatextual elaborations: i.e. the literary context leads to a higher number of all three indicators than does the non-literary one (1987: 69ff., 158); regard-

ing the polyvalent cognitions as well as the metatextual elaborations, however, the operationalization and the exact nature of its relation to the PC are not altogether transparent. In any case, these studies in combination with the others presented above justify the conclusion that certain aspects of the *process* of meaning constitution for literary texts correspond to the expectations on the basis of the hypothesis of PC.

*General conditions and effects of the 'assumption of optimization':* External factors influencing the process of meaning constitution such as the distinction made by Meutsch (1989) between 'experts' and 'novices' (on the basis of literary competence) clearly constitute an indirect indicator of the hypothesis of PC (we will not go into aspects of this study related to the AEC here). In this study Meutsch proceeds on the basis of the expectation that novices will be more likely than experts to regard literary texts as unreadable; he assumes that this will become manifest in a lower number of (specific) references to the text and the reader in case of the novices. This hypothesis is (partially) confirmed for three out of five content-analytic categories; experts do, however, also produce a higher number of unspecific references than do novices. Since Meutsch does not go into the relation between unspecific and different types of specific references (as contained in his category system), a definite conclusion as to the (lack of) confirmation of the above hypothesis cannot be drawn. Even if the hypothesis had been clearly confirmed, however, such a result would still not count as unambiguous evidence for the validity of the hypothesis of PC, but would rather seem to suggest a differential validity, its strength depending on the sample of subjects, respectively. This assumption is further supported by Steen's study on metaphor comprehension (1990; cf. above), in which he also included the factor 'experts vs. students'. The results more than confirmed his hypothesis that the degree of literary socialisation influences the realization of polyvalent reading: not only did the experts identify a greater number of metaphors and interpret these in a more 'polyvalent' way; in fact experts also tended to read non-literary texts in a literary fashion. It would thus seem advisable to include the differentiation according to different groups of recipients in the explication of the hypothesis of PC.

A second type of an indirect indicator is obtained by including among the dependent variables such measures which might (hypothetically) be expected to be in some way related to polyvalent constitutions of meaning. The study by Viehoff (1986) investigating the reception process of the poem 'Fadensonnen' by Celan (employing again the method of 'thinking aloud') might be placed in this category. On the basis of the assumption that subjects attempt to construct a frame of plausibility, Viehoff in his analysis of the protocols distinguishes between references to the process of understanding in general and references to the strategic problems of understanding in particular. These latter references, which might be assumed to precede polyvalent

constitutions of meaning – although Viehoff himself does not explicitly make this connection – turn out, as predicted, to peak just prior to the creation of a (plausible) literary frame of reference and then drop off rapidly. Leaving this result aside, however, this study demonstrates yet again the problem of stringent operationalizations derived from the theory: While Viehoff assumes that a high number of (meta-)statements referring to comprehension problems constitute an indicator for the lack of comprehension of the respective literary text, Meutsch in his studies has mostly taken these kinds of statements to indicate polyvalence (cf. above). On a very basic level these inconsistencies can of course be resolved (by further distinguishing between different subordinate phases of the process of comprehension, such as the recognition of these problems and the way of coming to terms with them); without such differentiations or the explicit justification of operationalizations, however, the value of the corresponding studies must remain in doubt (with respect to the validity of the hypothesis of PC).

This is the more relevant, the greater the 'distance of indirectness' between the indicators used and the quantitative surface structure of the PC. Hintzenberg et al. (1980), for instance, predicted that in the case of the reception of a text as 'literary', persons will be more tolerant in relation to unfamiliar *Kommunikates* than in the case of the reception of a text as 'non-literary'. This hypothesis was confirmed (employing the semantic differential and interviews), including the result that persons assume that the reception of a literary text will take more time than the reception of a non-literary text. Here, the relation to the hypothesis of PC is only of a very indirect kind; as a consequence, the theoretical specification is all the more important (cf. also section 4 below).

The studies by Hintzenberg et al. (1980) and by Viehoff (1986) do, however, at least indirectly take into account the factor of the text itself, which is for the most part neglected within the more recent work of the NIKOL-group (cf. above). This neglect manifests itself for instance in the use of ambiguous texts by Meutsch, who in addition explicitly claims the irrelevance of textual qualities for the process of comprehension (1989: 69; a claim which he is, however, forced to take back when taking into account his empirical data: l.c.); in the same vein Schmidt (1984) has stated that there exist 'no textual features evoking polyvalence' (1984: 317). By contrast, Zöllner (1990) explicitly draws attention to the question of text-reader-interaction in a constructive study, where he presents an empirical confirmation as well as a theoretical analysis of the relevance of the text factor. Employing the method of quotation analysis, Zöllner investigates (using *Gulliver's Travels* as his example) whether certain passages of literary texts are quoted with a particularly high frequency and at particularly great length in interpretations of these texts; he assumes that by identifying such passages so-called VIPs (very important passages) can be found. In one of his hypotheses he

makes the prediction that these VIPs are identical to those passages which are discussed in a highly controversial manner and drawn upon in order to justify specific readings of the text. On the basis of a (propositional) analysis he draws the conclusion that the typical VIP is polyvalent on several levels at once, each level requiring the reader to make a dichotomous decision (1990: 311). What this in fact means is that polyvalent 'textual offers' become polyvalent on the basis of specific passages, which are then in turn discussed in a highly controversial manner (within interpretations of these texts). Both the method as well as the theoretical assumptions offered by Zöllner do in our opinion contain a highly stimulating potential for further research (other empirical studies which do not explicitly refer to the PC point in the same direction, such as Hoffstaedter 1986). In this way, not only an empirical reconstruction of concepts from hermeneutical aesthetics (such as 'points of indeterminacy' or 'slots') might be achieved in the long run, but in particular also the integration demanded in the beginning of different parts of the hypothesis of PC: in this case the connection between text production directed by the PC (the corresponding textual structures constituting the result of this process of production) and text reception.

As regards the empirical validation of the hypothesis of PC, it is now possible to draw the following, still tentative, conclusions:

- The 'strong' generation of polyvalent constitutions of meaning must be assumed to occur primarily in the course of the *process* of reception;
- in relation to the *result* of the constitution of meaning in the literary context it is rather the 'weak' acceptance of polyvalence which applies;
- intraindividually the striving for a coherent meaning – which becomes manifest both in the process and the result of meaning constitution – generally leads to a preference for monovalence of the reception result;
- differentiations between different groups of recipients, particularly in relation to literary competence, must, however, be made; as a consequence, the hypothesis of PC is to be regarded as differentially valid;
- in addition, there probably exist relations to other effects of the PC (such as the evaluation and tolerance of problems of comprehension) which do, however, require further theoretical elaboration as well as more differentiated empirical study;
- finally the PC presumably stands in an interactive relation to the text factor, which also requires theoretic-empirical differentiation in the direction of the identification of individual passages which are relevant for polyvalence and the description of their structure.

#### 4. Perspectives for further research: Explanatory models, relevance for applications, need for qualifications

*Models of processes and explanation:* As it was to be expected and in fact already expressed above in the consequences to be drawn from validity testing, a historical systematization of the research development must in the end lead up to open problems in the sense of perspectives for the future. In the course of discussing those aspects of the hypothesis of PC which require further research, the potential of the PC for stimulating theoretical elaboration as well as empirical research on both the explanatory and the technological dimension will also become manifest (cf. below). Under the explanatory perspective, there is in the first place the problem of the way in which the PC (its empirical validity being taken for granted) affects the complex, general process of the reception and processing of texts. First attempts at modeling this process have been presented in particular by the NIKOL-group, for instance the model of the process of Kommunikat construction (PKC) by Hauptmeier et al. (1987), where the PC (and of course the AEC) is regarded as part of the procedural knowledge within the general knowledge structure of the individual, interacting in complex ways with other parts of the knowledge structure as well as with the 'control system' and thus influencing the construction of a mental model of the text (1987: 37ff.). Likewise, Meutsch in his research has attempted to integrate schema- and strategy-oriented models of understanding (cf. for instance 1987: 6ff.); in addition, he has attempted to adapt Van Dijk and Kintsch's model of discourse processing in general to the literary understanding of texts in particular (cf. 1986: 319ff.).

However, the reconstruction of the process of comprehension constitutes merely the basis for an explanatory model which takes into account in particular the general cognitive conditions playing a role in the processing of literary information (cf. also Schmidt already in 1984). In this respect, practically all concepts from the more recent research on information processing have to be tested as to whether they are suitable for the explanation of literary reception and processing. Explicit first attempts in this direction can for instance be found in Meyszies (1990; cf. also Meutsch 1986a), who draws in particular upon the concept of mental models, considering internal models (models of the external world on the basis of sensory data, conceptual knowledge, and inferences), alternative models (in the sense of models of possible worlds on the basis of modifications of internal models), and situation models (as models of the text situation) to be relevant for a processing of literary texts; he then makes a connection between these types of models and the concept of macro-structures and types of knowledge (knowledge about the practical world and about discursive entities; 1990: 517). His basic assumption is that ambiguities in understanding literary texts – unlike ambiguities in understanding non-literary textual material – cannot

be resolved by referring to practical knowledge only; instead, the reader also has to refer back to alternative models which can be described as macro-superstructure-constants. Meyszies further assumes that the reader's knowledge about fictional worlds is likewise cognitively represented in the form of schemata.

Thus the problem of the explanatory perspective takes us back to a question that was raised at the beginning of this paper (cf. section 2 above) in relation to questions of the formulation of hypotheses and definition, i.e. the distinction between various levels on which the convention might become manifest in different ways. Thus Meutsch (1987), for instance, also differentiates between the societal-sociological level – which he regards as the dimension 'proper' and consequently as central for the concept of convention –, the 'level of mediation between society and the individual' where conventions (and thus the PC as well) become manifest as procedural or declarative knowledge, and finally the level of individual cognitions, which is for instance the level on which Meutsch and Schmidt (1985) conceptualize the PC in the sense of a strategy (for reception and processing; 1985: 557). Kaufmann (1989: 283), on the other hand, regards conventions on this latter level as heuristics, assuming that heuristic thinking and the intuitive-holistic mode of information processing are particularly well suited for the resolution of problems in understanding literary texts. Further work on the hypothesis of PC within the ESL will hence have to clarify both theoretically and empirically in greater detail which concepts from within today's research on information processing, which can in principle be applied to problems of literary understanding, are in fact suited for being used within an explanatory model of literary comprehension processes; in addition, the various levels relevant for the concept of 'convention' and the relations between them will also have to be conceptualized and operationalized explicitly.

*Relevance for applications:* The problem of the relations between these various levels also serves to show the relevance of research on the hypothesis of PC for applications; this latter point is, however, connected all the way through with the question of the normative interpretation (and justification) of the PC. On the level of the individual strategies for reception and processing, for instance, this raises the literary-didactic problem of whether and how the individual text reception can and should be changed in the direction of greater intraindividual polyvalence. Beaugrande (1988) for instance reports on a kind of 'polyvalence training' for non-experts in reading poetry; students were instructed not to try and find a single 'correct' meaning, but to think about everything coming to mind which they found interesting and to allow as many different meanings as possible. Andringa (1989), however, states in the course of a survey of the literature on studies of the acquisition of literary reading competences, that so far there exist hardly any studies on strategies directed towards polyvalence; she further reports that

readers rather seem to aim at a single constitution of meaning which is in itself coherent (cf. also Ibsch 1988). There seems to be only one exception: the concept of the 'open end', which children are taught in school from about 14 years of age onwards, and which they apparently also apply from that point onwards. This raises the literary-didactic question whether the strongest version of the PC (intraindividual simultaneous generation of different reception products) should be aimed at in the didactics of literature and how this goal can be theoretically as well as empirically justified. In realizing this goal, practically all instructional strategies developed within the more recent didactics of literature oriented towards reception and production can be applied (from for instance Baurmann 1980; over Willenberg et al. 1987; up to Wermke 1989, to mention only some of the most outstanding developments). In this context, the ESL will have to concentrate in particular upon theoretically modeling the link between such instructional models and the PC and empirically testing their efficacy. The didactics of literature, however, constitute only the most immediate and the closest perspective for an application of the hypothesis of PC on the individual level, the practical relevance of this research being by no means yet exhausted. Thus van den Broeck (1989), for example, has drawn attention to the potential relevance of the hypothesis of the PC in reconstructing problems of translation.

The practical relevance of the PC on the social level has become clear in the context of the discussion of the relation between the literary and the legal system (cf. section 2 above; Barsch 1984, 1985, 1988; Dankert and Zechlin 1988). Here Barsch has in particular criticised the judicial practice of basically splitting a literary text into an aesthetic-formal component on the one side and a 'message' on the other. He sees in this a disregard of both the AEC (by implying referential relations) and the PC (by implying a 'correct' textual meaning). This has sparked off the discussion about the 'normative interpretation' of the hypothesis of PC, which has not yet been satisfactorily resolved (as to this Werber 1990 and Linder 1990 are undoubtedly right). But even this need for further clarification demonstrates how within an ESL problems of application can (and should) generate a dynamism towards more theoretical differentiation and greater precision.

*Need for qualifications?:* Increasingly precise differentiations of this kind might, however, (have to) lead to qualifications of the hypothesis of PC, particularly as regards its breadth of validity. Schmidt has always attributed to the conventions the function of delimiting the literature system against the outside and maintains this even in relation to areas which one would intuitively regard as characterized by permeability between 'art' and 'non-art': for instance advertising (Schmidt 1990) which is today regarded as containing ever more aesthetic elements (cf. for instance Kloepfer and Landbeck 1991). This also raises the question whether this might not constitute a too normative interpretation, whether this might not in fact be a problem that had – in

applying the PC consistently – better be empirically solved (cf. Kindt already in 1981; also Barsch 1991; Kramaschki 1992). And in this respect good arguments can be put forward in favour of the prognosis that literary and everyday communication are not separated by a strict, but rather by a permeable borderline. Thus Bange (1986), for instance, has drawn attention to vague and in particular funny elements of everyday communication which are neither subject to the fact nor to the monovalence convention. In addition, the ‘escape’ of everyday narratives from their usual instrumental function counts as a familiar phenomenon in linguistics (Gülich 1980). On this basis Bange arrives at the conclusion that there exist components of conversation as well as macro-structures which both everyday and literary communication have in common. In this context, Steen’s (1989) discourse theory of metaphor can of course also count as an example of an area where literary and everyday communication overlap. Finally there is also the possibility mentioned by Fokkema (1989: 6) that certain parts of a text are subject to the AEC and the PC (both in the course of production and reception), while other parts of the same text are not; this would mean that there is in fact no standardized way of determining the literariness of the production and/or reception of a text as a whole. These, however, really are questions which the ESL should above all solve by means of empirical research; and this empirical research will especially have to attend to and clarify the interrelations between the literature system and other (the ‘new’) media (also taking into account the perspective of the PC).

A final – but by no means marginal, possibly even a very basic – aspect of the empirical testing of the convention(s)’ breadth of validity concerns their historic-spatial relativity. In relation to such a historic-spatial qualification it is not only the perspective of inter-cultural comparison (for instance between east and west) which will become relevant, but intra-cultural distinctions – which were illustrated above in referring to the distinction between different groups of readers (on the basis of their status as ‘experts’) – will also play an important part. Qualifications on the historical dimension, as they are for instance put forward within literary history (cf. Jendricke 1988, Linder 1990), might be even more basic: According to this point of view, the AEC and the PC are merely ‘generalisations of specific historical literary subsystems which ... are not suitable for being used as distinct criteria for the definition of “literature” as such’ (Jendricke 1988: 81). For the ESL, this doubtlessly results in the necessity of attending to the diachronic dimension of the said convention(s) as well; and this in turn demonstrates (yet again) the necessity to put forward alternative, competing hypotheses of convention.

Again, tentative conclusions can be drawn with respect to research efforts immediately needed for testing the empirical validity of the PC going beyond the process of literary reception:

- Empirical research will have to deal with the question of how the PC affects the entire process of the reception of literary texts; under an explanatory perspective, constructs from research on information processing will have to be tested regarding their suitability as explanatory factors;
- factors of a more general nature will have to be included, such as differentiating the PC’s strength of validity in regard to different groups of recipients such as experts vs. non-experts (differential validity);
- starting out from the concept of ‘convention’, a theoretical as well as an empirical differentiation of the various levels of manifestation (ranging from social representations to individual action strategies) and a modelling of the exact relations between these levels are needed;
- the PC’s relevance for applications has to be elaborated; on the individual level of action strategies, this includes in particular the reconstruction of classic problems, such as those of literary didactics;
- in relation to the social level of conventions, the example of the discussion about the relation of the literary and the legal system points to the necessity of explicitly coming to terms with the problem of the normative interpretation of the PC (the importance of this question also suggesting itself on the individual level);
- furthermore, the question of the inner–outer-differentiation of the literature system and the complementary question of potential areas where the literature system and other media (or even everyday communication) overlap also has to be elaborated both theoretically and empirically;
- finally, future research on the PC will also have to include the diachronic perspective and thus the question whether the convention(s) might not be putting forth a concept of aesthetics limited historically as well as spatially, which ought to be confronted with and completed by elaborating alternative concepts of aesthetics and hypotheses of convention.

##### **5. Epilogue: Quantitative indicators for the empirical assessment of a research development**

In our opinion, the history of the research on the hypothesis of PC, which we have attempted to systematize, constitutes one of the most vital developments of research within the ESL. Under the perspective of further empirization it might thus be of interest if there were quantitative measures available for assessing the quality of such a research history. As a consequence, we are going to draw upon the potential for stimulation of this example and suggest three such measures which we will exemplify on the basis of the research on the hypothesis of PC. Last but not least this will also allow for a quantitative summary of the theoretic-empirical effectiveness of S.J. Schmidt in this area

of ESL.<sup>1</sup> A first aspect of this effectiveness which the example of the PC immediately suggests is contained in the theoretical breadth of the discussion a particular hypothesis has evoked. The concept of 'theoretical breadth' already contains an intuitive understanding of this evaluative dimension in the sense that the theoretical discussion following upon the pronouncement of a hypothesis is to be regarded as increasing in breadth, the greater the number of other scientists who enter into this discussion about the hypothesis, who make a reply, be it from a critical perspective or in the sense of a further elaboration. If a hypothesis was presented and elaborated in publications by its respective author only, one would certainly not speak of a theoretically broad reception and discussion. As a consequence, the proportion of theoretical publications by other scientists to the total of (theoretically oriented) publications seems like a suitable quantitative operationalization of this intuitive understanding; as publications can, however, be very different in size, one will have to use the number of pages as the measuring unit in order to arrive at a more 'just' operationalization. This results in the following suggestion for an operationalization of the evaluative aspect 'theoretical breadth':

$$TB = O / (O + S)$$

O equalling the number of pages by other researchers ('others'),

S equalling the number of pages written by the author of the hypothesis him-/herself ('self').

This quantitative measure of 'theoretical breadth' thus varies between 0 and 1, '0' denoting minimal, '1' maximal theoretical breadth.

In order to actually carry out a calculation for the example of the PC, procedural rules are also needed (for instance for dealing with 'borderline cases'), which in our case are as follows:

- Only papers (and of course books) actually published or accepted for publication between 1980 and 1992 are included; this excludes informal papers and 'grey' literature from the following calculation.
- Pages from articles which have appeared in a German as well as an (identical) English version or which have appeared twice in one of these languages in a near-identical version are counted only once. Likewise, second editions are not included in the calculation.

<sup>1</sup> This article being meant as a farewell to S.J. Schmidt, we have in assembling the publications (in journals) that constitute the basis for the following calculations concentrated on those journals edited by S.J. Schmidt himself, i.e. *Poetics* and *SPIEL*; as a consequence, the lists are not complete with regard to other relevant journals such as *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* or *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*. We do, however, assume that the resulting values for the various indicators would not be substantially different if one did also take these and further journals into account.

- In the case of 'pages written by the author of the hypothesis himself', all pages are included, regardless of whether these pages contain a restatement of positions published at an earlier date or an elaboration of S.J. Schmidt's former positions on the PC.
- In the case of 'pages written by others', only those pages are included in the following calculation which contain a critical discussion and/or elaboration of the PC; pages which are restricted to a restatement of Schmidt's own position or which refer only to the conventions in general without explicitly naming the PC are not counted.
- Where Schmidt is not the single, but co-author, half the relevant pages are attributed to Schmidt and thus counted as 'pages written by the author of the hypothesis himself', while the other half are attributed to the co-author(s) and hence counted as 'pages written by others'.
- In the case of empirical studies which contain a theoretical section, the respective pages are also included in the calculation of 'theoretical breadth'.

On the basis of these rules, the following value results for 'theoretical breadth' (for the studies and pages used in the calculation cf. the appendix):

$$TB = 123 / (123 + 43) = 0.74$$

This value serves as a quantitative summary of what we hope to have shown on the content-level in the course of the above historical-systematic structuring of the various aspects: that the hypothesis of PC which Schmidt put forward in 1980 has in the course of the following decade attracted a broad theoretical reception and discussion.

In evaluating the research history of a hypothesis, however, an ESL in particular also has to take into account the complementary perspective of 'empirical depth'. By this we mean (intuitively) the relation between theoretical and empirical studies. Parallel to 'theoretical breadth' we shall operationalize this measure as the proportion of empirical studies to the total of (theoretical as well as empirical) studies on the PC. In the case of this measure, the (separate) publications would appear to be the most suitable measuring unit, as it is the most likely to yield an adequate summary of empirical and theoretical contributions. In the long run it will certainly be possible and in fact useful to discuss whether the unit 'empirical publication' had better be restricted to mean a single study (with a specific design) respectively; publications containing two or more such studies would then have to be counted more than once. This, however, would raise additional problems of weighting, such as the number of subjects, methodological stringency of the research design, procedure, and analysis, etc. Since the ESL, however, is – so to speak – still in its infancy, particularly as regards methodological aspects, a further differentiation of this kind does not appear

useful, at least not in relation to the area of the PC. As a consequence, we will stay with the admittedly 'coarser' unit 'single publication'. This includes all studies published, regardless of whether the various empirical (and theoretical) contributions are made by the author of the respective hypothesis him-/herself; the differentiation as to authorship (self or others) which was of central importance for the calculation of 'theoretical breadth' is thus regarded as irrelevant for 'empirical depth'. Like 'theoretical breadth', 'empirical depth' also varies between values of 0 and 1, '0' denoting minimal, '1' denoting maximal empirical depth. On this basis, the following operationalization of 'empirical depth' results:

$$ED = E/(T + E)$$

E equalling the number of empirical publications,

T equalling the number of theoretical publications.

Before being able to carry out the actual calculation for the example of PC, procedural rules are again necessary in order to determine which publications are to be included and what weight they are to be given:

- As in the calculation of 'theoretical breadth', 'grey' literature is not included in the calculation.
- Likewise, studies published twice in near-identical versions are counted only once.
- While the general rule restricts the calculation to those studies where the PC is explicitly discussed, there are two exceptions in the calculation of 'empirical depth':
  - A first exception concerns those theoretical studies which, while referring to the conventions only in general and not explicitly mentioning the PC, nevertheless state an important argument. These studies are included in the number of 'theoretical studies', but given a weight of only 0.5.
  - A second exception concerns those empirical studies which employ the concept of polyvalence, but do not explicitly refer to the PC. Because of their conceptual closeness to the PC, these studies are included in the number of 'empirical studies', but given a weight of only 0.5.
- Studies which combine an extensive theoretical discussion with empirical work are counted twice: as theoretical and as empirical studies.

On this basis, the following value results for the measure of 'empirical depth' (for the studies used in the calculation cf. the appendix):

$$ED = 10.5/(36 + 10.5) = 0.22$$

The resulting value of 0.22 for 'empirical depth' clearly demonstrates that the history of research on the hypothesis of PC has so far been characterized by theoretical discussion rather than empirical tests of validity. Thus it makes sense that the above discussion of aspects in need of further research should have stressed in particular the efforts towards empirical validation. Quite in

general, this kind of quantitative indicator does of course offer the possibility of comparing the research history of different hypotheses and theories (within the ESL) or to even attempt to assess the entire area of this young paradigm in relation to this evaluative perspective. We would expect, however, that the calculation of the empirical depth of other or even the entire research development(s) of the ESL would not yield any significantly better values, the institutional establishment of the paradigm being as yet far from satisfactory. We think it more likely that the actual (low) value for the 'empirical depth' of research on the PC would in fact rate among the highest by comparison with other aspects of the ESL; in the end, however, this is an empirical question which remains to be investigated and decided in the course of future research.

Since practically all contemporary positions within the philosophy of science demand that empirical research be theory-driven, the idea of combining the two above measures in order to assess the 'theoretic-empirical effectiveness' of a specific hypothesis or theory in its entirety suggests itself. According to our intuitive understanding of the concept, a relation on the basis of multiplication would appear most plausible, resulting so to speak in an area whose edges are formed by 'theoretical breadth' and 'empirical depth'. Here, however, we are confronted by the computational problem that in the case of values less than 1.0, the idea of an area cannot be reached by multiplication, only by finding the roots. As an approximation of this 'area model' we hence choose the square root of the mean of theoretical breadth and empirical depth; in addition we further multiply the resulting value by 10 in order to arrive at a measure which varies – in contrast to the two separate values (of the edges 'theoretical breadth' and 'empirical depth') – between 0 and 10, '0' again denoting minimal, '10' maximal theoretic-empirical effectiveness. On this basis the following operationalization of 'theoretic-empirical effectiveness' results:

$$TEE = ((TB + ED)/2) \times 10$$

TB equalling:  $O/(O + S)$ ,

ED equalling:  $E/(E + T)$ .

The value resulting for the research on the hypothesis of PC is 6.93 which, considering the background of ESL described above, in our opinion constitutes an impressively high result. Of course this evaluation is likewise a question which has to be decided empirically by applying these indicators to other research developments within the ESL. We do, however, suppose that this value expresses a theoretic-empirical effectiveness of S.J. Schmidt which will not be easily achieved by other authors and their hypotheses.

## Appendix

### 1. Studies and pages used in the calculation of 'theoretical breadth'

#### *Number of pages by other researchers:*

- Andringa 1989: 9-10, 2 pages
- Bange 1986: 78-80, 3 pages
- Barsch 1991: 41-46, 6 pages
- Barsch 1988: 73f., 2 pages
- Barsch 1984: 229, 235f., 3 pages
- Barsch 1985: 209f., 2 pages
- de Beaugrande 1989: 12-14, 20f., 5 pages
- van den Broeck 1989: 71, 1 page
- Fokkema 1989: 6f., 14, 3 pages
- Groeben 1982a: 268-270, 272, 290, 294, 6 pages
- Groeben 1982c: 154-158, 5 pages
- Groeben 1983: 221, 223, 232-235, 6 pages
- Groeben and Vorderer 1986: 137, 1 page
- Ibsch 1985: 205, 1 page
- Hauptmeier and Schmidt 1985: 82ff., 1.5 pages
- Hintzenberg, Schmidt and Zobel 1980: 15-18, 1.5 pages
- Ibsch 1988: 335f., 2 pages
- Jendricke 1988: 80ff., 3 pages
- Kaufmann 1989: 277, 283f., 3 pages
- Kindt 1981: 489-493, 503, 6 pages
- Kramaschki 1992: 27 pages
- Linder 1990: 51ff., 3 pages
- Meutsch 1986a: 308f., 321, 3 pages
- Meutsch 1987: 15-18, 27, 46f., 7 pages
- Meutsch 1989: 48ff., 3 pages
- Steen 1989: 118, 121-123, 125-138, 17 pages

#### *Number of pages by S.J. Schmidt himself:*

- Hauptmeier and Schmidt 1985: 82ff., 1.5 pages
- Hintzenberg, Schmidt and Zobel 1980: 15-18, 1.5 pages
- Schmidt 1980: 100-114, 159-174, 31 pages
- Schmidt 1983: 29, 1 page
- Schmidt 1984: 315ff., 3 pages
- Schmidt 1989a: 329, 1 page
- Schmidt 1989b: 431f., 2 pages
- Schmidt 1990: 393, 1 page
- Schmidt and Groeben 1989: 18, 1 page

### 2. Studies used in the calculation of 'empirical depth'

#### *Number and weight of theoretical publications:*

- 1 - Andringa 1989
- 1 - Bange 1986
- 1 - Barsch 1984
- 1 - Barsch 1985
- 1 - Barsch 1988
- 1 - Barsch 1991
- 1 - de Beaugrande 1989
- 1 - van den Broeck 1989
- 0.5 - Cupchik 1988
- 0.5 - Defonso 1986
- 1 - Fokkema 1989
- 1 - Groeben 1982a
- 1 - Groeben 1982c
- 1 - Groeben 1983
- 1 - Groeben and Vorderer 1986
- 0.5 - Halasz 1989
- 0.5 - Hauptmeier 1983
- 1 - Hauptmeier and Schmidt 1985
- 0.5 - Hauptmeier and Viehoff 1983
- 1 - Hintzenberg, Schmidt and Zobel 1980
- 1 - Ibsch 1985
- 1 - Ibsch 1988
- 1 - Jendricke 1988
- 1 - Kaufmann 1989
- 1 - Kindt 1981
- 1 - Kramaschki 1992
- 1 - Linder 1990
- 1 - Meutsch 1986a
- 1 - Meutsch 1987
- 1 - Meutsch 1989
- 1 - Schmidt 1980
- 1 - Schmidt 1983
- 1 - Schmidt 1984
- 1 - Schmidt 1989a
- 1 - Schmidt 1989b
- 1 - Schmidt 1990
- 1 - Schmidt and Groeben 1989
- 1 - Steen 1989
- 0.5 - Werber 1990

*Number and weight of empirical publications:*

- 0.5 – Groeben 1981  
 1 – Hintzenberg, Schmidt and Zobel 1980  
 0.5 – Hömberg and Rossbacher 1981  
 1 – Ibsch 1988  
 1 – Meutsch 1984  
 1 – Meutsch 1986b  
 1 – Meutsch 1987  
 1 – Meutsch 1989  
 1 – Meutsch and Schmidt 1985  
 1 – Steen 1990  
 1 – Viehoff 1986  
 0.5 – Zöllner 1990

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## The twain shall meet? Some observations on Soviet cultural semiotics and empirical study of literature and the media

Artur Blaim

The paper offers a preliminary discussion of the possible points of convergence between the cultural semiotics of the Moscow-Tartu school and empirical study of literature and the media based on radical constructivism. Both theories are shown to be concerned with the description and explanation of the way texts function in the society rather than with the correct interpretation of textual meanings. Different priorities and emphasis can be attributed to the different social and political conditions in which the two theories came into existence.

Over the last few decades semiotics and structuralism in the Soviet Union and in the West have lived through testing times. Of course the experiences have been different. In the Soviet Union these disciplines had to endure a period of persecutions and ideological attacks, and this was followed by a conspiracy of silence or embarrassed semi-recognition on the part of official science. In the West these disciplines endured the test of fashion. They became a craze that took them far outside the bounds of science.

(Lotman 1990: 4)

### 1.

In what follows I intend to make a preliminary comparative study of Soviet cultural semiotics and the empirical study of literature and the media based on radical constructivism. These are perhaps the most interesting rational

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