

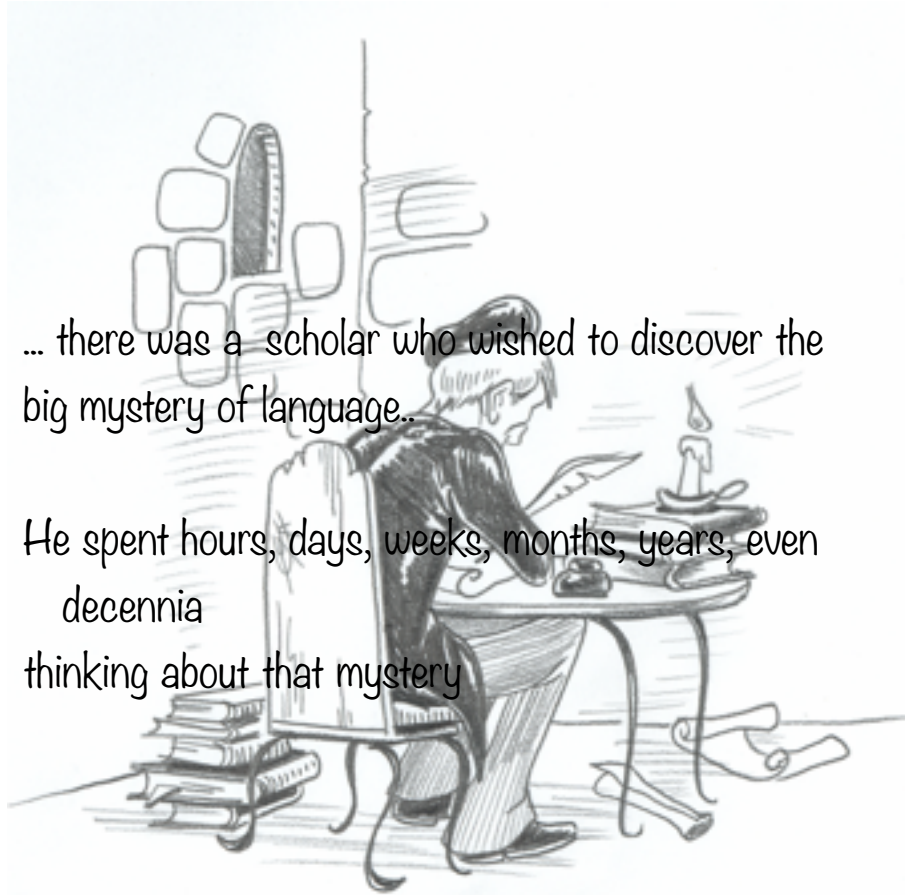
# The Mystery of Language

for Dr Theo A.J.M. Janssen,  
grandad of Joris, Derek, Tim en Noor,  
on the occasion of his retirement as professor of Dutch  
Linguistics  
at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Once upon a time...

... there was a scholar who wished to discover the big mystery of language..

He spent hours, days, weeks, months, years, even  
decennia  
thinking about that mystery



And finally, on the eighth day of the ninth month of the sixth year, he knew it.

And he told other scholars, young and old.





First there was silence.

Then came sound.



“Are you sleepy  
again?”



Then came speaker-hearer interaction.

“Gaaaa!”

Grandad!



Then the word.



Grandad is my big friend



Then came the sentence.

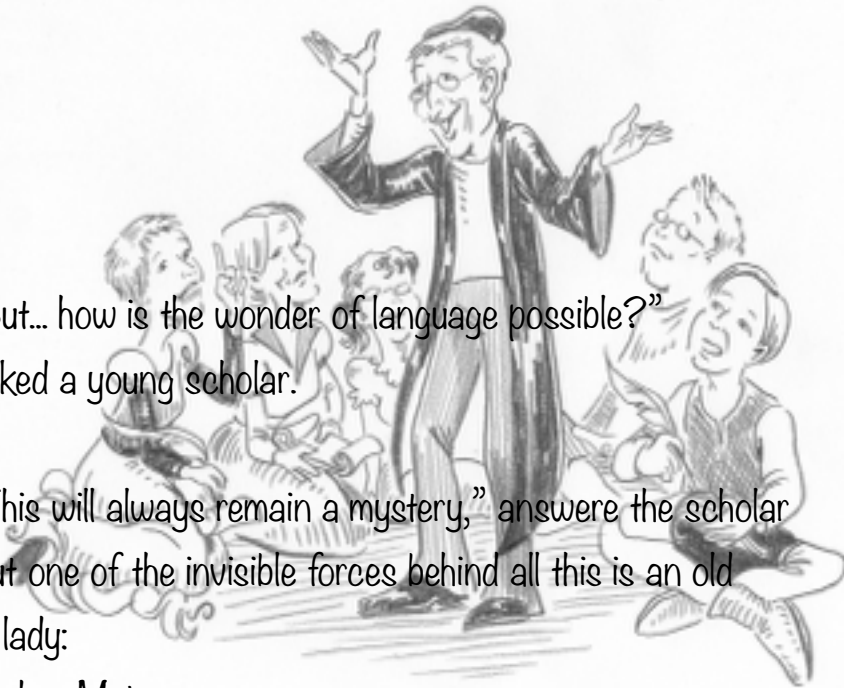
“This is the ‘I-am-your-big-friend-and-you’re-mine’  
hug”



And finally the sentence attached to a word.

“But... how is the wonder of language possible?”  
asked a young scholar.

“This will always remain a mystery,” answered the scholar.  
But one of the invisible forces behind all this is an old  
lady:  
madam Metonymy.



The scholar had a look at his story and thought it was good enough.

Now that he understood it all, Theo rested.

