Discussion of the phenomenological reduction in the introductory chapter called attention to the two characteristics which are an outcome of its attempt to suppress metaphysical presuppositions. First, it reduces transcendent reality to phenomenal status, and second, it will accept nothing as true that is not self-evident and clear.

The question to be treated in this chapter is the effect on language of this first reduction.

Language as a possible phenomenal object of investigation offers no particular difficulties. Like any other "object," it can be examined even when its external relations have been bracketed out of consideration. That is to say, it can be taken as a *cogitatum* or *noema*. (Whether such an investigation would yield an accurate description of the essence of language is another question. The fact is that the investigation is at least possible.) The important question that must be dealt with is the status of language as it functions in the acts of consciousness, *cogitationes*, its *noetic* role in the investigation and description of all *noema*, including language itself.

While it is surely true that for Husserl the *noesis* (act) and *noema* (object) function as aspects of the total intentionality of consciousness, it is also true that the two can be distinguished at least logically. Where the *noesis* is, for example, an act of perception, its *noema* will be affected by the character of that act and will be a *perceived* object (rather than an imagined or remembered one). The relationship between the two is close and important. Nonetheless, the qualities of the two may differ. The act of perception may be brief, enlightening, etc., while its object may be
"colored," "moving," etc.¹ These sorts of qualities are not interchangeable. Thus, while noesis and noema form one intentional unit, it is possible to note different qualities in each.

It will not do to suggest, then, that whatever is true of the noematic language, language as intentional object of investigation, is likewise true of the noetically functioning language. Their relationship is that of language to meta-language. The language used in the act of analysis is different from that which is the object of analysis. Hence, what is true of the one need not always be true of the other.

Similarly, recourse to intuition will not resolve the difficulty. While it is true that Husserl relies heavily on the role of intuition in the inquiry, and one might make a reasonable attempt to show that intuition or insight is not dependent on language, Husserl himself is quick to admit that he will not limit himself to such occasionally possible a-linguistic modes of consciousness. He is aiming ultimately at the description of intuitive experience. Furthermore, he freely admits the close relationship between language and the acts of consciousness:

Now human thinking is normally done in language, and all the activities of reason are as good as entirely bound up with speech.²

Two points are clear: the discussion of the problem of language in the first reduction is noetic, i.e., it concerns the status and function of language as it operates in consciousness; secondly, Husserl is aware that language is not expendable in these conscious acts, being necessary at least in order to make description possible.

¹ Husserl uses quotation marks around noematic qualities in order to distinguish them from the qualities of an actual physical object. "The inverted commas are clearly significant; they express that change of signature, the corresponding radical modification of the meaning of the words. The tree plain and simple, the thing in nature, is as different as it can be from this perceived tree as such, which as a perceptual meaning belongs to the perception, and that inseparably. The tree plain and simple can burn away, resolve itself into its chemical elements, and so forth. But the meaning – the meaning of this perception, something that belongs necessarily to its essence – cannot burn away; it has no chemical elements, no forces, no real [realen] properties." Ideas, I, § 89.