*General Semantics.* Developed by Korzybski (1933), general semantics has become an influential approach to the study of language and meaning (Fabun, 1968; Hayakawa, 1952; Johnson, 1946). Bandler and Grinder's (1975) analysis of psychotherapy using concepts from general semantics is intriguing to those interested in a cognitive approach to therapy. Bandler and Grinder call their approach neurolinguistic reprogramming, many aspects of which can easily be combined with RET, due to their common emphasis upon dissuasion and semantics. Ellis has explicitly used many concepts from general semantics. But the fullest integration of RET and general semantics has been accomplished by the Dutch psychologist René Diekstra (Diekstra and Dassen, 1979). Since Diekstra's work is not available in English, we will go into some detail about his integration.

The first assumption is that reality is a process—things are never quite the same from moment to moment. The room in which you are reading these words is not identical to the same room an hour ago. Slight changes have occurred: there are different air molecules, new dust, the light may be changed. Reality is dynamic, ever changing, however slight and imperceptibly. There are many potential stimuli in the reality of one's environment at any given time. Individuals do not perceive all stimuli available to them at any given moment, and hence their perceptions are reductions of reality.

The perceiver can describe stimuli, either to himself or to other people, as he perceives them. Descriptive statements are most accurate when they include the perceiver-describer in the account and when they specify time, place, and circumstances. Description is a symbolic behavior and corresponds to the *A* of Ellis's *ABC* theory, although Diekstra prefers to categorize all symbolic behavior under *B* (similar to the practice of Maultsby, 1975). The resolution to the disagreement is to use the *ABC*s as

a didactic and mnemonic device for clients and to base theoretical discussions on the emotional episode.

The next level of abstraction consists of inferences about descriptive statements. To illustrate: "I saw a person driving into a service station at ten o'clock this morning" (descriptive statement). "The person was going to buy gasoline at that service station" (inferential statement). A descriptive statement is a fact that can be verified; an inferential statement is an opinion stated as though it were a fact.

The most significant inferential statements occur when some form of the verb *to be* is used to describe a thing or event or oneself. Known in general semantics as "the is of identity," it is the process of equating a thing with its label. Hence, it is not correct to describe oneself in terms of "I am . . ."; it is preferable to say, "I act this way under these specific circumstances." At one time Albert Ellis made "the is of identity" a central feature of RET (Moore, 1977). He wrote four books in "*e*-prime"; that is, in English without any form of the verb *to be*. While this practice underscored his position against global evaluations of anything, especially of the self, it proved to be an awkward mode of writing, and he later abandoned the practice. Although *e*-prime is a cumbersome mode of writing, and nearly impossible to speak, the basic notion remains an important feature of RET.

At the highest level of abstraction, and the one most removed from reality, are evaluative statements—statements about the goodness or badness of some thing or event, as though the thing or event were good or bad in itself. It is not the thing that is good, bad, beautiful, or ugly, for these are people's views or opinions or judgments of the thing. This is not a good typewriter. It is a typewriter that I evaluate as good at this time, in this place, for this purpose. We can turn an evaluative statement into a descriptive one by including the evaluator, the time, the place, and other circumstances of the evaluation. Evaluative statements are equivalent to irrational beliefs. Descriptive statements in which one expresses an opinion are rational beliefs. Thus, the task of RET, according to Diekstra, is to reduce evaluative statements to descriptive statements that emphasize *personal* preferences, likes, and dislikes.

General semantics promotes clear thinking and helps one

Second, RET is grounded in psychology in general. RET takes both a learning approach to treatment *and* an attitude change approach. It includes the usual behavioral concerns for stimuli and responses and reinforcing consequences, as well as for perceptual and cognitive processes.

Third, because of its comprehensiveness, RET can be applied to a wide variety of human problems. It is action oriented, stressing behavioral change, experimentation, and experience, whereas the so-called insight therapies work toward self-enlightenment and understanding as goals in themselves. Unlike strict behavioral approaches, RET willingly includes examination of values that people live by and at times suffer by—issues of guilt, shame, moral right and wrong, and ethical and existential anguish that cannot be touched by behavioral technology. Thus, RET combines the strengths of rigorous behavioral methods with the humanistic qualities of insight approaches.

Fourth, RET is parsimonious in that it postulates no mysterious psychic energies or bodily quirks and yet allows for the influence of somatic events on psychological processes.

Fifth, RET is a multimethod approach to treatment, unified by a theoretical model of disturbance. RET does not rely solely on argumentation, direct confrontation, or exceptionally strong language. RET attends to clients' misperceptions, demoralizing expectations, illogical mental operations, and maladaptive social behavior, and to their own structuring of their interpersonal environments.

Sixth, RET is a multifunctional approach to treatment. It aims for emotional change and behavioral change and cognitive change. RET can, therefore, easily incorporate newly devised tactics from other approaches to counseling and therapy and from other fields, such as philosophy, into its diverse multimethod intervention techniques.