

# Lecture One

*What is Linguistics?*

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# DEFINITIONS

- **1.** The **scientific**(or systematic) study of the **natural language**.
- *Q. what implications does the word “scientific” have in the definition above?*
- -a scientific work (i.e. linguistics) is characterized by objectivity, adequacy, precision, anti-metaphysical, systematicity, explicitness (clarity).
- -a scientific work is empirical, rather than intuitive; that is, it relies on data, observations, experiments, etc.
- *Q. what does a “natural language” mean?*
- -it means the human language.

- 2.** It is a science (or discipline) that describes language in all its **aspects**.  
-It is a science, which **formulates theories** as to how language works.

*Q. what is meant by “aspects”?*

-Phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic etc.

# ***WHAT LINGUISTICS IS NOT?***

## ***Four misconceptions:***

1. Linguistics is not the study of the history of language (i.e. *Comparative Philology*).
2. It is not learning of many languages (i.e. *Polyglotism*)
3. It is not concerned with *literary criticism* (e.g. scale of values or evaluating languages in the light of some social or aesthetic standards)
4. It is not a *traditional study of grammar*.

## ***WHAT IS TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR?***

Traditional Grammar means the older approaches to language study.

## *Q. WHAT ARE THE MAIN FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR?*

- 1.** Traditional Grammar considers the *written language primary*.
  - It does not consider the spoken language displaying different patterns of grammar, vocabulary, and usage).
  - Rules have been written as if they apply to the entire of language (i.e. written and spoken) (e.g. the plural rule –S); that is Traditional Grammar does not study the spoken language at all.
  - Any informality in language is labeled “bad grammar.”
  - it considers a written word more permanent than a spoken one.
  - it considers the written form by well-known authors the best type language usage.

**2.** Traditional Grammar is Latin-based; that is, languages should be described in terms of Latin. Latin in this sense is a *standard language* (e.g. split infinitive; tenses ‘past , present, and future’).

**3.** Traditional Grammar considers language a *logical construct*; i.e. it is characterized by regularities; one language is more logical than another. (e.g. it’s more logical to say spoonful than spoonsful).

**4.** Traditional Grammar considers some languages more *complex* (*primitive*, *beautiful*, etc.) than others.

**5**

**. Traditional Grammar regards the oldest meaning of a word the true or correct one; i.e. the etymological meaning (e.g. .(قطار It considers the coining of new words a sign of decay.**

**6**

**. Traditional Grammar prescribes rules of correctness; it is prescriptive. Consequently, traditional grammarians consider themselves judges!**

***Q. IN WHAT SENSE DOES LINGUISTICS  
DIFFER FROM TRADITIONAL  
GRAMMAR?***

***1.***

***Linguistics is descriptive, not prescriptive.***

***Linguists do not tell you how you should speak.***

***2.***

***Linguistics gives priority to the spoken  
language. (The spoken word preceded the written  
everywhere in the world).***

***3.***

***Linguistics does not force languages into a  
Latin based framework. It tries to set up a universal  
framework.***

## *WHAT DOES LINGUISTICS TRY TO ANSWER?*

1.

*What is language?*

2.

*In what sense are languages different from each other?*

3.

*What do languages have in common?*

4.

*How does language work?*

5.

*How does a child learn to speak?*

6.

*How does human language differ from animal communication?*

7.

*How does one describe/analyze an unwritten language?*

8.

*Does language reflect social/class differences? What are the jobs that language does in society?*

9.

*What is the relationship between language and thought (or language and literature, etc.)*

## ***WHAT IS A LINGUIST?***

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***A linguist needs not be fluent in languages.***

-

***He/she should be able to describe/analyze/explain linguistic phenomena; he/she describes language in its own terms.***

-

***A linguist is a consumer of language (i.e. facts about the language) rather than producer of it. He/she is an objective observer of language.***

-

***A linguist is like a critic; he has the ability to talk about the poem but he cannot produce one.***

***WHAT DOES STUDYING  
LINGUISTICS REQUIRE?***

-

*To have a basic background knowledge of procedures, techniques, criteria, and terminology (e.g. identifying the basic sounds of an unwritten language; identifying words, etc.)*

*Lecture Two*

*The scope of Linguistics*

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***Phonetics:***

The scientific study of the physical properties of human speech sounds  
(e.g. sound wave, frequency, pitch, etc.)

***Phonology:***

The scientific study of sound patterns of a language; that is, the way in which language is patterned.

***Morphology:***

The scientific study of the structure of the words (i.e. the formation of words)

*Syntax:*

*The scientific study of the structure of phrases and sentences and their arrangement.*

-

*Syntax in linguistics means Grammar in its traditional*

*s ) قواعد/نحو.*

-

*Grammar in linguistics means language. Grammar is what we know about language; it represents our linguistic competence*

*Q. What is*

*linguistic competence*

-

*The basic linguistic knowledge that a native speaker has internalized*

*Semantics:*

*The scientific study of meaning.*

*Q. Is it possible to study meaning scientifically? If yes,  
How?*

*-*

*-(The answer will come later*

***Pragmatics:***

***Pragmatics means the study of language (or meaning) in use.***

***It studies language in ways, which cannot be predicted (or known) from linguistic knowledge alone.***

-

***Pragmatics has connections both with semantics and with other branches of linguistics that link language with the external world.***

*Semantics*

*Pragmatics Psycholinguistics*

*Sociolinguistics*

*Applied linguistics*

*Computational linguistics*

*Stylistics*

*Anthropological linguistics*

*Philosophical linguistics, etc.*

Phonology (i.e. the sound)  
Syntax and lexicon (i.e. vocabulary)

Semantics (i.e. the system of  
What are the basic linguistic levels?)

What is the goal/aim of the linguistic theory?

To discover the laws of human language.

-

To see whether there are universal properties that hold for all human languages.

-

Universal Grammar is the ultimate goal of linguistic theory.

Q. Are there facts pertaining to all languages?

YES

Q. How?



All languages change.



All languages use a finite set of sounds.



All languages contain rules of word/sentence formation.



All languages have nouns and verbs.



All languages refer to past time, negation, questions, etc.



All languages use semantic notions such as male/female, animate/inanimate, etc.

***LECTURETHREE***  
***What is language?***

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## ***DEFINITIONS***

- 1.*** *Language is the human essence; it is the distinctive qualities of the human mind. (Chomsky)*

**2.** *Language is a specialized **sound signaling system**, genetically programmed to develop in humans.*

*Q. Is using sounds (to send and/or receive messages) human specific?*

–NO, even animals use sounds.

***Q. How are sounds produced?***

–By the so-called ***organs of speech***. (*see the figure below*)

***Q. Is the primary function of any organ of speech to produce sound?***

–NO, the primary function is biological.

***Q. How?***

–The teeth, lips, and tongue for instance are used for eating.

*Q. what advantages does using sounds have?*

- Sounds can be used at some distance; they can be used in the dark.
- Sounds leave the body free for performing other activities.
- Thousands of messages can be sent and/or received by sounds.

### **3. LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.**

*Q. Is language the only means of communication?*

–NO, but the most common way.

*Q. How?*

-We spend too much time daily talking, listening, reading, and writing?

*Q. Can humans communicate in other ways?*

–Absolutely YES.

*Q. How?*

–by winking, smiling, laughing, waving, singing, dancing, etc.

*Q. Can the human language be transferred to other media?–*

YES.

*Q. How?*

–Written form of language based on symbols, sign language, and many other **codes**.

*Q. what is a code?*

–The language we use is by itself a code; Braille code; Morse code, etc. All of these are **channels of communication**.

**CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION**

**Encoding**

**Code**

**Decoding**

**Written / Spoken**

**Language**

## ***WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO KNOW A LANGUAGE?***

1. When you know a language, you have the ability to perceive and produce whatever utterances satisfy your needs; that is, you can communicate with others.
2. When you know a language, you know which sounds are part of your language and which are not (e.g. /p/, /v/ do not exist in Arabic); which sounds may start a word; which sequences of sounds are allowed initially or finally in a word, etc.
3. When you know a language, you know the system that relates sounds and meanings (e.g. /haus/ represents or signifies the concept of a building made for people to live in).
4. When you know a language, you are able to combine words to form sentences etc. Knowing words only mean nothing.
5. When you know a language, you know what sentences are appropriate in what situations.

## *COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE*

- What one knows about language is referred to as *competence*.
- How one uses this knowledge in actual behavior is called *performance*.

## ***WHYDOWESTUDYLANGUAGE?***

- The use of language is inevitable in our daily life; it is an integral part of being human.
- Studying language enables us to know how a child acquires the mother tongue.
- Studying language enables us to use it adequately in society; consequently to have an acceptable social status.
- Scientists from other disciplines show interest in studying language (e.g. psychologists, sociologists, etc.)

## ***CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE HUMAN LANGUAGE***

- Q. Are there characteristic features which are human languages specific?—YES*
- Q. What are they?*

—Let's draw a comparison between the human language and animal language (or way of communication).

## *1. USE OF SOUND SIGNALS*

- This feature is shared by both animals and human beings; therefore, it is not a characteristic feature of the human language. In other words, the use of sounds is not human language specific.

## ***1. ARBITRARINESS***

- Arbitrariness means lack of connection between a word and the object it refers to.
- The human language is arbitrary; i.e. the symbols are arbitrary.

Word (Sound)

object(Meaning)

/

*Q. IS the animal's language arbitrary?*

- In animals' communication, on the other hand, there is a strong link between the actual signal and the message an animal wants to send.
- When a cornered cat arches its back, that is a warning message:
- Arching the back (*signal*) = Warning (*message*)

*Q. Are there connections between some signals and messages in human language?*

–YES, but not too many; there are a few (words).

*Q. what are these words called?*

–The phenomenon is called *Onomatopoeia*; the words are called *onomatopoeic*.

*Examples:*cuckoo, quack-quack, bang, mew

*(CONTINUED)*

*Lecture Four*

***FEATURES OF LANGUAGE***

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### ***3. The need for learning***

*Q. Do animals know how to communicate without learning?–*

YES, their systems of communication are *genetically inbuilt*(e.g. Bee-dancing, barking, etc.).

*Q. what about human beings?*

-Humans are quite different from animals; they need a long learning process to acquire the language.

-The human language is *culturally transmitted*(i.e. from one generation to another).

-Human language is by no means totally conditioned by the environment. A human being brought up in isolation does not acquire a language.

## ***4. Duality/Double Articulation***

- The number of messages an animal can send is restricted to the number of basic sounds it has. (e.g. a cow has under ten, a dolphin up to thirty, etc.)
- Most animals can use each basic sound only once.
- The human language has a stock of sound units (or phonemes). Each phoneme is normally meaningless in isolation; it becomes meaningful only when it is combined with other phonemes:  
e.g. ***f, g, d, o*** mean nothing separately.  
They become meaningful only when they are combined together as in ***fog, dog, god***
- This organization of language into two layers is called ***Duality*** or ***Double articulation***.
- Duality makes language more flexible, because a far greater number of messages can be sent.

## 5. *Displacement*

-Animals cannot communicate about things which are not in the *immediate environment*. An animal utters its danger cry only when danger is present; it cannot give information about a danger which is removed in *time* and *place*.

-An exception to this occurs in the communication of honey bees. When a worker bee finds a source of nectar, it returns to the hive and inform the other bees of the exact location of the nectar.

-Human language, by contrast, can communicate about things that are absent as easily as about things that are present.

-Human language can cope with any subject whatever, and it does not matter how far away the topic of conversation is in time and space.

## ***6. Creativity (Productivity)***

- Most animals have a very limited number of messages they can send or receive (e.g. a male of grasshopper has a choice of six messages).
- Not only is the number of messages fixed , but so are the circumstances under which each can be communicated.
- Animals communicate about the same things again and again.
- Humans, by contrast, can produce new utterances whenever they want to.
- Humans are not obliged to say the same thing every time.
- Human language is creative.

## *7. Patterning*

-Many animal communication systems consist of a simple list of sounds. There is no internal organization within the system.

-Human language does not place sound side by side randomly or haphazardly, but on a few well-defined patterns.

-Human language is a network of interlinked elements in which every item is held in its place and given its identity by all the other items:

e.g. The boyeats an apple daily.

## ***8. Structure Dependence***

-Unlike animals' ways of communication, the human language is structure dependent.

-Language operations depend on understanding of the internal structure of a sentence, rather than on the number of elements involved. The following sentences have the same structure

(SV):

e.g. *The little beautiful girl dressed in black* is laughing.

*Jane* is laughing.

*She* is laughing.

*Summary:*

- Language is a patterned system of arbitrary sound signals, characterized by structure dependence, creativity, displacement, duality, and cultural transmission.

## *Origin of Language*

- *How did we start to talk? When? etc.*

- Linguists regard this topic as being outside the scope of linguistics.

- They are more interested in studying actual language than in speculating about its remote origins.

- *Why language began?*

- Humans needed a greater degree of cooperation.*

## *Functions of Language*

- *Language function* means the jobs language does in human society.
- Communicative function: the primary function of language is to impart factual information and to convey essential commands; that is, to communicate efficiently.
- Emotive function: to communicate feelings and emotions.
- Social function (phatic communion): to maintain social contact on a friendly level.
- Aesthetic function: as in writing poetry.
- Biological function: as in releasing nervous tension.

*Lecture Five*  
*Directions in the study of language*

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### ***Directions in the study of language***

There are three main directions in Linguistics:

- Historical Linguistics*
- Descriptive Linguistics*
- Generative Linguistics*

## *Historical Linguistics*

- 

*Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century:*

*Philosophers*

*used to study language, e.g. Plato, Aristotle, etc.*

- 

*Plato, for instance, is said to have been the first person to distinguish between nouns and verbs.*

- 

*Arab philosophers:*

الكندي *Al Kindi*

الفرايبي *Al Farabi* ( 872 – 950 )

ابن سينا *Avicenna*

*In the 18  
th century:*

-

*27 th , Dec. 1786 = the birthdate of linguistics*

*Q. What happened at this time?*

*Sir William Jones (British Orientalist and Jurist) read a paper to the Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta stating that structural similarities do exist between Sanskrit on the one hand, and Greek, Latin, Celtic and Germanic on the other hand.*

*Q. What does this discovery mean?*

-

*These languages must spring from one common source/origin, Proto Indo European*

*Q. What do structural similarities or likenesses mean?*

-

*Phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic similarities.*

*Q. Do structural similarities exist among other languages? YES.*

*Q. Any examples?*

-

*Arabic ( salam ), Hebrew (shalom), and Syriac shlama*

*Q. Did scholars assume that such languages are members of the same family? YES.*

*Q. What is a language family?*

-

*It is a group of languages that stemmed from one ancestor.*

*Q. What that common ancestor is called?*

-

*It is called Protolanguage . 'Proto' =*

***Q. Did Jones' discovery fire the imagination of scholars? YES***

***Q. How?***

**-**

***Scholars, for the next hundred years were preoccupied with:***

***(1)***

***Writing comparative grammars , grammars which first compared the different linguistic forms found in various members of the Indo European language family (i.e. Proto Indo European***

***(2)***

***Setting up a hypothetical ancestor , Proto Indo European , from which all these languages were descended.***

*Q. What are the largest language families?*

-

*Of the 142 different language families, the following six are the main ones:*

*1.*

*Indo European (Indo Iranian, Albanian, Armenian, Balto Slavonic (Russian, etc ), Greek, Celtic Welsh,etc .), Germanic (German, English, etc.), Italic (Latin, etc.)*

*2. Sino*

*Tibetan*

*3. Niger*

*Congo*

*4. Afro*

*Asiatic*

*5. Austronesian*

*6. Trans*

*New Guinea*

*The mid  
19<sup>th</sup> century:*

-

*The influence of Darwin's book "Origin of Species" and his Theory of Evolution*

-

*It seemed natural to attempt to chart the evolution of language alongside the evolution of language.*

-

*The emphasis on language change eventually led to a major theoretical advance.*

*The last quarter of the 19  
th century:  
A group of scholars at Leipzig nicknamed the “  
Young  
Grammarians ” or “Neo Grammarians” claimed that  
language change is regular*

*Q. What does language change is regular ' mean?  
In any word of a given dialect, when one sound changes into another the change will also affect all other occurrences of the same sound in similar phonetic surroundings/environments.*

*For example:*

*k*

*in ch in*

*Old English Modern English*

*i.e. the change of*

*(k sound) to ch affected all other k*

*sounds which occurred at the beginning of a word before*

*( or (*

*So we also get: chicken, child, chill, cheese, chest, etc.*

**Lecture Six**  
**Descriptive Linguistics / Structural Linguistics**

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# Language Description

- In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the emphasis on language studies shifted from **language change** to **language description**.
- **Language description** means describing single languages at one particular point in time (i.e. **Synchronic study**).
- **Q. Who led this change of emphasis?**
- **Ferdinand de Saussure**, a Swiss linguist, who is sometimes called ‘the father of modern linguistics’.

### Q. What was de Saussure's main contribution?

- He was the first to claim that all **language items are essentially interlinked**. - It was de Saussure who suggested that language was like a **game of chess**, a system in which each item is defined by its relationship to all the others. - de Saussure insisted that language is a **carefully built structure** of interwoven elements. This idea initiated the era of **structural linguistics**.

**Q. What does the term 'structural' mean?**

- It means that language is not a collection of unconnected items, but a **patterned system of interdependent elements.**

**Q. Did de Saussure introduce other new notions to the field of linguistics?**

- YES, he made FIVE distinctions: **Q. What are they?**

**1. Synchronic and Diachronic studies** **Synchronic study:**  
describing single languages at one particular point in time.  
**Diachronic study:** describing single languages across time.

## **2. Langue and Parole**

**Langue** (language): an abstract system of rules common to all speakers of one language. Langue means (Chomsky's) competence.

**Parole** (speech): the concrete individual act of speaking, or the actual linguistic behavior. Parole is the same as Chomsky's performance.

### **3. Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic relationships**

**Paradigmatic relationships** are vertical relations. The elements of one sentence can be substituted by other elements with the same functions.

e.g. The old good-hearted old man with a stick was laughing.

**S P**

**NP VP**

He was laughing/laughed

**Syntagmatic relationships** are linear; each word in a sentence is related to other element(s) in the sentence.

e.g. The little black dog is eating a bone.

#### 4. Signified and Signifier (The linguistic sign)

- A **linguistic sign** is the concrete and integral object of the linguistic science.
- Language is a deposit of signs.
- The linguistic sign unites a **concept** and an **acoustic image** (i.e. sound). Therefore it is a psychological entity in two sides:

**Lecture Seven**  
**Structural Linguistics in America**  
**Generative Linguistics**

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## The origin of structural linguistics

- - **In Europe:** Linguistics, represented by de Saussure, started as a reaction to philological studies.
- - **In America:** Linguistics, represented by Leonard Bloomfield, started as an offshoot of anthropology.

**Q. Was there any relationship between Language and anthropology?**

- Anthropologists were eager to record the culture of the fast-dying American-Indian tribes, and their languages were one aspect of this.

**Q. Were there any firm guidelines for linguists to follow when they attempted to describe exotic languages? – NO**

**Q. What new ideas did Bloomfield introduce to the field of linguistics?**

- Bloomfield, in his book entitled “Language” (1933), attempted to lay down precise procedures for the description of any language.
- He considered that linguistics should deal objectively and systematically with observable data.

**Q. What did this procedure involve?**

- This involved:

1. Finding native speakers of the language and collecting sets of utterances (i.e. data) from them.
2. Analyzing the data phonologically and syntactically (on the basis of their distribution within the data) without recourse to meaning.

**Q. Why did Bloomfield neglect the study of meaning? -**

Bloomfield and his followers (structural linguists) were more interested in the way items were arranged (i.e. the internal patterns or structure) than in meaning because meaning was not amenable to precise methods of analysis. - They claimed that “studying meaning will be possible only when human knowledge advanced beyond its present state”. That is, studying meaning will be possible when all the items in a certain language are given precise meaning such as „salt“ = NaCl; „iron“ = Fe; „water“ = H<sub>2</sub>O, etc.

**Q. What was the ultimate goal of structural Linguistics?**

- To find (or the perfection of) **discovery procedures**.

**Q. What are the discovery procedures?**

- A set of principles that would enable a linguist to „discover“ or „uncover“ accurately the linguistic units of an unwritten language.

# Generative Linguistics & Universal Grammar

- Noam Chomsky published a book entitled “Syntactic Structures” in 1957. This book started a revolution in linguistics, viz. Generative Grammar

- **Q. How**

- - Chomsky transformed linguistics from a relatively obscure discipline into a major social science of direct relevance to psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and others.

- - He shifted attention away from detailed descriptions of utterances, and started asking questions about the nature of the system which produces the output.

**Q. Why did Chomsky criticized Bloomfieldian linguistics? -**  
For two reasons: 1. Bloomfieldian linguistics was too ambitious in that it is impossible to lay down exact rules for describing of a language from a mass of data. 2. It was too limited because it concentrated on describing utterances which happened to have been spoken (i.e. old utterances). **Q. What should Grammar be then?**

## **Chomsky's conception of Grammar**

- Grammar should also take into account possible future (or new) utterances. In this sense only could grammar account for the creative or productive aspect of the language.
- Grammar is constituted of rules that native speakers have internalized. These rules specify which sequences are permitted and which are not.

**Q. What is the linguist task then?**

According to the points above, the linguist's task is to discover these rules; that is, the rules that constitute the grammar of language that Chomsky called **Generative Grammar**.

# Generative Grammar (GG)

- Generative Grammar is an **explicit grammar** that consists of a set of **finite rules** which specify which sequences of a language are possible and which impossible. That is, a grammar is a device that generates all the grammatical sequences of language and none of the ungrammatical ones.
- This finite or limited set of rules can generate an **infinite** number of sentences.

**Q. Why GG is referred to as explicit?**

Simply because nothing is left to the imagination. The rules must be precisely formulated in such a way that anyone would be able to differentiate between ill-formed and well-formed sentences even if they did not know a word of the language concerned.

# Language Universals

- Chomsky redirected our attention towards language universals. He pointed out that as all humans are rather similar, their internalized language mechanisms are likely to have common properties. Human beings are pre-programmed with a basic knowledge of what language in general is, and how it works.
- - Chomsky argues that linguists should concentrate on finding elements and constructions that are available to all languages.
- Linguists should specify the universal constraints or bounds within which human language operates (i.e. **Universal Grammar**)

**LECTURE EIGHT**  
**DECIDING WHERE TO BEGIN**  
**THE BEST WAY TO BEGIN STUDYING LANGUAGE**

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## **LANGUAGE AS A GAME**

- A game is an activity determined by rules. One has to find out how the game is played. Similarly, language is an activity (just like a game) governed by rules.
- If one wants to find out how any game is played, one should deal with questions related to:

**The aims of the game**

**The principles of interaction**

**The permitted moves**

# 1. THE AIMS OF THE GAME

- The aim in playing chess is to defeat each one's king in order to win.
- In football, the two teams try to kick the ball into a net in order to score.
- The aim of language is not only to convey information or express feelings, but also to perform some specific purposes such as:
  - Obtaining information (by means of raising questions).
  - Making others do something (by making orders).
  - Making promises, requests, threatening, etc.

# THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERACTION

- In any game certain principles should be followed.
  - In chess: two players are required, they play in turn, time should be taken into account, etc.
  - In football, some basic principles should be followed as regards the number of teams, the number of players in each team, the plan, etc.
- Language users take it in turns to speak, e.g.

A: Good morning

B: Hello

- Moreover, most of the turns are socially prescribed.

## **THE PERMITTED MOVES**

- In any game, there are moves which are permitted, and others which are not.
- In chess, some pieces can move across the board only in straight lines and others only diagonally.
- In language, some basic rules determine what is well-formed sequence and what is not. In English, for instance, a verb usually follows its subject. In Arabic, the verb precedes its subject.

**Q. So where should one begin studying language from?**

- Linguists usually prefer to begin with what is permitted and what is not, with the grammar of the language; that is, from the basic linguistic core outwards (from phonology to pragmatics and other disciplines that link language with the external world such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, etc.).
- Whereas beginning with aims and principles is problematic.

**Q. Why beginning with aims and principles is not preferred? Why beginning with aims and principles is problematic?** - Because aims and principles are closely related to the social structures of the society involved. - Linguists usually prefer to begin studying language with the basic linguistic core (i.e. components of Grammar) outwards (i.e. to pragmatics and other branches, which link language with the external world such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, etc.

# VIEWS ON STUDYING THE CENTRAL COMPONENTS OF GRAMMAR

There are two views that look at linguistics differently:

- **Particular**
- **Universal**

## **THE PARTICULAR VIEW**

- The particularists are interested in knowing more about one particular language (e.g. a teacher of French).
- Their intention is to write a perfect grammar of that language, usually by making a detailed study of the patterns of that language alone (e.g. studying the relationship of Arabic vowels to one another).
- They are likely to consider that the chief role of linguistics is the development of analytic techniques which will enable them to fulfill their chosen task.

## **THE UNIVERSAL VIEW**

- The universalists want to find out more about language as such; that is, they are interested in the phenomenon of language as a whole (e.g. professional linguists, psychologists, etc.).
- They try to lay down a grammatical framework which will be suitable for all languages.
- Although such people may write a grammar of a particular language, they will be doing this in order to test out a theory with wider implications; i.e. whether it will fit any given language.

**Q. Are the two views contradictory or complementary?** - There are extremists from each of these groups of people. - Those interested in a particular language argue that the universalists are too theoretical or unreal. - Those interested in language as a universal phenomenon accuse the particularists of being narrow-minded people who simply like collecting facts.

**Q. The two views are complementary not contradictory. How?**

- No linguists can work on a universal framework unless they posse a good amount of information about individual languages against which to test their theories.
- Conversely, collecting information about different languages means nothing unless some attempt is made to relate different facts within a wider framework.

**Q. Is it wrong/right to assume that anyone interested in linguistics must fall into either category?**

- It is wrong to have such assumption. People may carry out both types of study.
- Some would start out with an interest in a particular language, and then move on to becoming interested in language as such.

**Q. Why is someone working on a single language likely to want to widen out his study?** He needs to know, for example,

- Whether the phenomenon they meet is unique or commonplace.
- How widespread is this phenomenon in other languages?
- Is English exceptional in having (or not having) this phenomenon?
- If a language does make a certain distinction, are there any other related characteristics which are likely to follow in consequence?

**Q. Why does a universal grammar have important implications for our knowledge of the human race?**

Such a grammar might reflect innate properties of the human mind. Chomsky states, “There are very deep and restrictive principles that determine the nature of human language and are rooted in the specific character of the human mind”.

# REQUIREMENTS OF STUDYING LINGUISTICS

- It is important for anyone studying linguistics (or an unwritten language) to have:
  - A basic background knowledge of the techniques of descriptive linguistics, particularly the procedures and terminology used in the identification of basic linguistic items.
  - The use of such techniques to break down the flow of speech into segments.
  - How is it possible to identify the phonemes (i.e. Basic sounds) of any unwritten language
  - Knowledge of how can one identify words. By what criteria can a word be split up into smaller segments?
  - Knowledge of the basic components of a sentence.
  - Knowledge of lexical relations, etc.