

# INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS

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## **Introduction**

There has always been some interest in linguistics, even without people realising it. After all, one of the first assignments for the early man was to give names to the creatures and objects around him. In recent times, linguistics has become a growing and exciting area of study, impacting greatly on such diverse fields as education, anthropology, sociology, psychology, computer science, language teaching, among others.

Though the field of linguistics is important, many people, even among the highly educated, possess very limited knowledge of the field. That explains why a lot of people will expect a linguist to speak a variety of languages. Those who speak several languages are *polyglots*; they may not be *linguists*. A language teacher who may have some training in language study may not also qualify as a linguist. Indeed, the interest of the language teacher may not be to study language objectively, observing it scientifically, recording the facts of language and making generalisations about human language.

As a result of the close connection between linguistics and the field of language study on one hand and the ability to speak two languages (*bilingualism*) or more (*multilingualism*) on the other hand, there is usually some confusion associated with linguistics as a discipline. There is therefore, the need to explore, in some detail, the nature of linguistics, highlighting its components, processes and functions. Speculations about the origins of language also form part of the discipline of linguistics.

## **I. The Concept of Linguistics**

In spite of the consensus on the general interest of linguistics, different authors have defined it from different perspectives. We shall be guided by a few definitions presented below:

“ ... *the study of human language* Langacker (1973:5)

“ ... *the science of language.*” Pei and Gaynor (1980:124)

“ ... *the scientific study of language.*” Crystal (1980:212)

By considering linguistics as the study of language in its widest sense, we imagine that the discipline will discuss every aspect and all varieties of language. Though this definition is wide enough to accommodate the full range of activities and processes in the study of language, there is no indication of the nature of the method of linguistic investigation. Knowledge of linguistics requires some definite steps and precise methods. Indeed, the definitions by Chambers and Langacker are limited by this lack of reference to precise steps and methods.

The last two definitions by Pei and Gaynor and Crystal tend to emphasise the method of linguistic investigation. Both indicate that linguistics should be scientific. It is this desire to introduce a precise dimension to linguistics that has produced the following descriptions of the field:

- Linguistic Science
- Linguistic Sciences
- The Science of Language
- The Sciences of Language
- The Scientific Study of Language
- The Science of Languages
- The Scientific Study of Languages

Perhaps, it will be neater to consider linguistics as the scientific study of Language (note, language spelt with capital L). Language, as used here, refers to the abstract entity referred to as the linguistic system. In this sense, linguistics studies Language as a system, but draws examples from a variety of languages. Since Language is an abstract system, its concrete realisations are the different languages of the world.

Originally, linguistics was confined to world languages (i.e. human languages). But, in modern times it has extended to the study of sign language, machine language, animal language and artificial intelligence. From the earlier preoccupation with the

vocally organised “noises”, linguistics now studies the printed medium as well. Indeed, linguistics has been found to be relevant in all aspects of communication.

### **Language as the Subject-Matter of Linguistics**

Recall that the scope of linguistics has been presented as accommodating all aspects of language and communication. This means that language is at the centre of linguistics. There is therefore, the need to analyse language, highlighting its characteristics and functions. However, emphasis will be placed on human language.

The possession of language is the major distinction between human beings and other animals. It is this language that makes human communication special. There are other systems of communication for other lower animals. But, none of these other systems of communication is as creative and as complex as language. Let us discuss the characteristics and functions of human language.

### **Characteristics of Human Language**

Human language exhibits the following characteristics:

- Creativity
- arbitrariness
- duality
- displacement
- cultural transmission
- pattern congruity
- constancy
- total feedback
- versatility
- specialisation.

**Creativity:** Creativity in language is that quality of expressing new ideas, producing and comprehending new sentences which the language user has never heard before. It is this quality that allows the language user to communicate most effectively and in a most complex way.

**Arbitrariness:** The relationship between sounds and meanings in language is arbitrary. This means that there is no direct resemblance between sounds and what they mean.

There is equally no direct link between words: and what they mean. The implication is that meaning in language is a matter of convention. Every society decides on the meaning associated with different words and structures. There are also shades of meaning associated with different words and sentences. These shades of meaning are constant sources of problem in communication.

**Duality:** For most other systems of communication, one sound, one call or one tone represents just one meaning, but in human language, several sounds and several words can combine to yield longer expressions. It is this power of combination that gives human language its duality. Duality ensures that entirely different meanings are derived by combining the same sounds, words and structures in different ways. Consider the following examples:

Stable → tables – from the same sounds /s,a,b,t,l,e/.

John greeted Marry    Marry → greeted John – from the same  
words, greeted, Marry, John.

**Displacement:** The ability of language users to discuss things and situations that are not immediately available using their language is referred to as displacement. It is displacement that enables users of a language to talk about the present, the past and the future.

**Cultural Transmission:** Animals acquire the sounds of their parents biologically. This is genetic transmission. However, in the context of human language acquisition, language is culturally transmitted. Children grow up to speak the language of the environment in which they grow. That means that the culture has a great influence on language behaviour.

**Pattern Congruity :** Pattern congruity as a characteristic of language means that language is an organised system. This system is established by the different rules that govern the combination of sounds, words, sentences and longer structures.

**Constancy:** Though human language has been described as arbitrary, there is a relatively fixed association between words and what they represent. Without that relative constancy, there will hardly be any mutual communication among members of the speech community. Indeed language use is a matter of convention which should be fairly constant.

**Total Feedback:** The element of feedback makes it possible for people to think through and reflect on the message they intend to transmit. It is this forward-feed and feedback that guarantee the quality of the message.

**Versatility:** Human language has been found to be versatile enough to express every aspect of human behaviour. It is this quality of versatility that has made language a very strong instrument of communication.

**Specialisation:** Language has been found to be a very specialised skill since human beings can be talking and at the same time be engaged in other totally unrelated activities. Indeed, language does not disturb other physical activities.

### **The Roles of Language in Communication**

Language has been found to play the following communicative roles:

- Informational role
- Expressive role
- Phatic role
- Directive role
- Ideational role, and
- Performative role.

**The Informational role of language:** Language is used as the chief means of exchanging information. Information occurs as messages with which people shape their views.

**The Expressive role of language:** Emotions, feelings and attitudes are expressed through language. Expressions are apparent in exclamations and wishes

**The Phatic Role of language:** The emphasis on the phatic role of language is the use of language to establish and maintain relationships with other people within a special community. Such relationships are maintained with a number of fixed expressions used in greeting and other social functions.

**The Directive role of language:** Language is used directly if we apply language to influence the behaviour of other by giving orders, instructions, suggestions and commands.

**The Ideational role of language:** The ideational role of language relates to the use of language in controlling the forces of nature within the people's cultural context.

Language is used ideationally in rituals, incantations, libations, and prayers. There is a strong indication of belief and fact.

**The performative role of Language:** Language is used to perform certain functions which bring about a sudden change in the state of affairs of people in the real world. Utterances are usually made to sentence people, acquit people, wed people and promote people. Utterances and written documents are often used to restrict movement into certain areas. Such forms of language use are aspects of the performative role of human language.

**Speculations about the origin of Language:** Linguists have made speculations about the origin of language. Some speculations may appear more appealing than others. Yet, none of them says with certainty when man developed language. The most enduring speculations about human language are as follows:

- The Divine source
- The oral – gesture source
- The natural sounds source, and
- The physiological adaptation.

**The Divine Source:** This speculation accords with the scriptures and other religious accounts. According to Jewish and Christian accounts, Adam, the first man created by God was the first linguist who gave names to other creatures. Following the Hindu tradition, language came from the goddess Sarasvati, the wife of Brahma, the creator of the universe.

The implication is that even without any formal training or exposure to any language, children will begin to speak an original God-given language. Incidentally, no experiment has confirmed this. Rather, children kept in seclusion after birth have been found to speak no language.

**The Oral – Gesture Source:** There is the speculation that links physical gestures and orally produced sounds. This speculation gets justification in the understanding that we still communicate with gestures and other bodily expressions.

The oral – gesture speculation tends to propose a specific connection between sounds and gestures such that a set of oral gestures involving specifically the mouth, in

which movements of the tongue, lips and other parts convey certain patterns of movement similar to physical gesture.

The main problem with this proposal is that there are far too many messages that may not be easily transmitted by just gestures.

**Physiological Adaptation:** There are certain features of human beings which are perceived to be adapted for speech productions, and which no other animals possess. For instance, human teeth are upright, human lips have much more sophisticated muscle formations than is found in other animals, even primates; the human mouth is relatively smaller and can be opened and closed rapidly. The tongue is also very flexible with the larynx very specially made. All these facilitate speech production. The human brain is also lateralised such that the left hemisphere is used for speech production.

### **Linguistics as Scientific Study of Language**

Linguistics has been presented as the scientific study of language. This definition raises some confusion especially if we consider the methods of such natural sciences as Physics, Chemistry and Biology which are based on laboratory experiments. There are however, many disciplines which are referred to as the social sciences – Sociology, Economics, Political Science, etc. These subjects are described as the social sciences because they employ methods through which data are collected, analysed and conclusions reached. Similarly, linguistics is defined as scientific because it adopts the procedures of *observation, data collection, hypothesis formulation, data analysis/description* and theory formulation (i.e. linguistic laws).

**Observation:** Certain facts of language relating to pronunciation, word forms, sentence patterns and meaning mechanism are observed before the urge for investigation develops. With the observation, the linguist gets to the stage of data collection

**Data Collection:** Before the linguist can make any tentative or generalised statement about human language, he will need to collect data from different language samples. These data are grouped for further analysis. It is from the analysis that the linguist will draw conclusions about particular languages and about the nature of human Language in general. Data analysis is similar to experimentation in the physical sciences.

**Formulating Hypotheses:** Hypotheses are tentative conclusions based on assumptions. They are not tested and can therefore not be taken as general laws. With more evidence from a larger pool of data from different languages, theories of language emerge.

**Formulating theories or laws:** A theory is a tested and accepted result of an experiment. A theory can be verified through experimentation and analysis. From a careful analysis of data from a variety of human languages a number of linguistic theories have emerged. Indeed, the proposition that every language has a number of parts of speech has been accepted as a theory.

Further impetus to the description of linguistics as scientific comes from the interaction between linguistics and other disciplines. Indeed, linguistics borrows its framework of analysis from the social sciences - fieldwork methods, sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis. Much of what derives from these social sciences methods forms part of sociolinguistics.

## **II. THE DEVELOPEMNT OF LINGUISTICS AS A DISCIPLINE**

Language has provided enough fascination to humanity over the ages. It has been an object of serious inquiry for over 2,000 years. Though much of the knowledge about human language at the early stage was mainly subjective and anecdotal, with people reflecting on the nature of meaning, ideas of appropriateress and the origins of different languages, there were objective investigations. Within the objective framework, scholars have investigated aspects of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation in a systematic way. There were different areas of emphasis in different centres and at different times. We shall consider the contributions of grammarians and philosophers of Ancient Greece, Rome, India and other civilizations to the growth of linguistics. We shall gradually introduce some of the recent developments.

### **The Contributions of the Greeks.**

Plato (427 – 347 BC) provided the first discourse on the origins of language and the nature of meaning. In Plato's *Cratylus*, a dialogue about language, two opposing ideas about the origin of language were put forward. One group held the view that language originated as a product of convention, making the relationship between words and the things they represent arbitrary. Another group held the view that language came naturally such that an intrinsic relationship exists between words and what they represent. These opposing ideas developed into two schools of philosophers – the

conventionalist, and the naturalists relating to those who believe in language as a product of convention and those who believe in the natural origin of language respectively.

Ancient Greek grammarians and philosophers were also interested in finding out whether regularity (i.e. analogy) or irregularity (anomaly) offered a better explanation of language. To those who believed in analogy, language was perceived to be regular, producing identical rules, characteristics and meanings. To the anomalists, on the other hand, emphasis should be on the many instances of exceptions to rules – there is ample evidence to show this lack of correspondence as in the existence of irregular verbs, nouns and the lack of correspondence between sex and gender. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., a group of philosophers called the *stoics* established the formal basis of grammar of Greek. They identified grammatical notions and grouped words into parts of speech - such as cases for nouns. Incidentally, Dionysius Thrax of Alexandria (100 B.C.) wrote the first formal grammar of Greek.

Greek grammarians and philosophers based their analyses on the written language. Indeed, the word grammar (Greek: *grammatike*) originally meant the art of writing. Accent marks were only added to written texts as a guide to pronunciation. The preoccupation was in the areas of grammar and etymology (origin of words) rather than on phonetics. Efforts were made to ensure correct forms and excellent styles by comparing new texts with the language of the ancient writers like Homer. The language had to be preserved from the corruption of the spoken forms. Greek forms were perceived to be universal to all languages of the world. This belief encouraged prescription of language behaviour. Languages were not described as they were, but were forced to be as they ought to be. That explains why English and many other languages were forced to adopt Greek, and later Latin structures.

### **Linguistics in Ancient Rome**

Roman grammarians and philosophers adopted Greek categories and terminology in describing Latin. A major development by Latin grammarians was the codification of Latin grammar under the headings of etymology, morphology and

syntax. Much of this codification was done by Marcus Varro (116 – 27 B.C.), who also held the view that language was a social phenomenon with a communicative purpose.

Towards the end of the millennium, many Roman authors wrote in the area of grammar and rhetoric. Cicero (106 – 43 B.C.) wrote on style; Quintilian (1<sup>st</sup> century AD) on usage and public speaking; while Julius Caesar wrote on grammatical regularity. Other authors produced insightful comments on different aspects of Latin grammar. The Roman period produced a model of grammatical description which many languages in Europe adopted up till the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The legacies of the Roman period became the traditional approach which is still adopted in grammatical analysis till the present day.

### **The Development of Linguistics in India**

Indian philosophers and grammarians were motivated by religious Puritanism. Hindu priests became conscious of the fact that their language had changed from what it used to be in the oldest sacred texts, the *Vedas*. These changes were noticeable in grammar and pronunciation. Yet, the priests felt that for certain religious ceremonies to be successful, they had to reproduce accurately the original forms of the texts. The priests therefore developed courses in phonetics, etymology, grammar and metrics. They had to establish the facts of the old language systematically with a view to producing authoritative texts. Between 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., *Panini* the great Indian grammarian produced a comprehensive set of rules on word formation. The work carried detailed phonetic descriptions, highlighting articulatory properties of sounds and the influence of sounds on one another. Indeed, a lot of insights about Language and which modern linguists adopt derived from Panini's explanations.

It should be noted that developments in linguistics occurred in other centres, and at different times. For instance, a group of philosophers called the *Sophists* existed in Alexandria, in Egypt in the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Sophists were more interested in writing. Orientation changed from oratory (which was the emphasis in Rome) to the art of good writing – i.e. stylistics. There were also developments in the study of linguistics in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. German linguists combined the study of speech

and writing. However, writing was just seen as complementary to speech. Indeed, the primacy of speech was maintained. In relation to writing, emphasis was on grammar textbooks. Manuals, handbooks and grammar primers were produced. Language learning and teaching were prescriptive with rules of correct usage rigidly laid down.

For the sake of clarity and comprehensiveness, there is the need to discuss the development of linguistics along the lines of the period of major developments. That way, it may be profitable to consider the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

### **Linguistics in the Middle Ages**

Much of what obtained in Greece and Rome could be described as the events of the Dark Ages. Latin which was the language of education in Dark Ages provided the link between the Classical period and the Medieval (i.e. Middle) times.

During the Middle Ages, grammar, dialect and rhetoric formed a major component of the arts. Grammar was at the centre of learning. During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, a tradition of speculative grammar developed. Grammatical notions were explained from the point of philosophy. Grammar was perceived to be universal, with differences among languages as merely peripheral.

It was also in the Middle Ages that lexicography and translation developed. Translation flourished because of the increase in missionary work. The ideas of Greek authors were expounded. A great tradition of Arabic developed, leading to the production of the *Qur'an*. Following the crusades, there were opportunities for contact with Greek, Arabic and Hebrew linguistic traditions.

### **Linguistics during the Renaissance**

The Renaissance which occurred from the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was a period of the rebirth of classical (i.e. Greek and Latin) learning. That period coincided with the discovery of the New World (i.e. the Americas) and the discovery of the Chinese linguistic tradition. There was also much progress in Arabic and Hebrew studies. Developments in Hebrew were related to the Bible. Towards the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the grammar of many different languages were written. Many European languages

(especially those of the Romance family such as Italian, Spanish, French) were more systematically studied. Many academics came into being with many dictionary projects embarked upon. The development of printing led to the rapid dissemination of ideas and materials.

As the modern times approached, new philosophical issues emerged. For instance, by the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the arguments between the rationalists and the empiricists over the role of innate ideas in the development of thought and language emerged. The rationalists believed that knowledge of language is innate and can be studied through the exercise of pure reason. The empiricists on the other hand believe that at birth, the human mind is blank and knowledge of language is dependent on experience.

There was a number of important trends during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Latin gradually ceased to be the universal medium of communication. Rather, many modern languages were used. There were many proposals for universal grammar – thus favouring the concept of comparative philology. The historical relationship between Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin was established. There was also a systematic approach to the study of phonetics.

### **Linguistics in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Many of the developments in linguistics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century derived from the theoretical formulation of a Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, whose work *Cours de Linguistique generale (A Course in general linguistics)* was published posthumously in 1916 by his former students. Another motivation for the development of linguistics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the interest of American anthropologists who were concerned with a proper description of American Indian languages and cultures before they got into extinction. The two pioneer American anthropologists were Franz Boas and Edward Sapir. In general terms, Ferdinand de Saussure is taken to be the father of modern linguistics. Ferdinand de Saussure introduced a sharp change that emphasized the study of the principles governing the structures of living languages.

### **Major Contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure to the Development of Linguistics.**

Rather than emphasise the generalisation of rules of Language with Greek and Latin as the sources of all rules, Ferdinand de Saussure argued that every language should be studied *sui generis* (i.e. on its own merit). He appeared to have acquired insights from field methods available in the social sciences. It should be recalled that the use of field methods have been described as the scientific processes – *observation, hypothesis formulation, data collection, data analysis* and *theory formulation*.

Based on the scientific insights into the nature of language, Ferdinand de Saussure proposed four basic pairs of ideas concerning human language.

- Diachrony Vs Synchrony
- Langage Vs Langue Vs parole
- Signifiant Vs signifie
- Syntagmatic Vs Paradigmatic.

### **Diachrony Vs Synchrony**

Saussure made a distinction between historical (diachronic) and non-historical (synchronic) approaches to the study of language. From a diachronic perspective, language is studied as a continually changing medium such that present language forms are deemed to have evolved from previous language systems. It is this feeling that favoured the study of philology. In philosophy, the changes in word forms are studied.

The synchronic view considers a language as a living whole, existing as a “state” at a particular moment in time. The argument is that it is more profitable to study a language as it is before delving into its past. What informs this feeling is that language is dynamic. One can be a good user of a language without necessarily relating to the past forms of that language.

## Langage Vs Langue Vs Parole

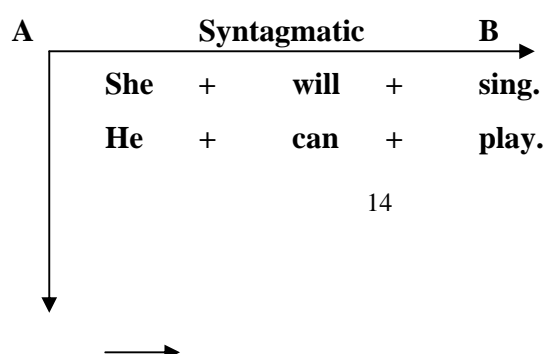
Language can be perceived from a variety of angles. This multi-dimensional approach to the understanding of language prompted Saussure to introduce three terms – *langage*, *langue* and *parole* to describe different aspects of language. *Langage* is the speech faculty present in all normal human beings through heredity. Deriving from *langage* are *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* is the totality of the language system comprising the sounds, the words and the sentences. Indeed, *langue* is the ideal abstract level of language. *Parole*, on the other hand, is the actual concrete act of use. It is a dynamic, social activity of a person expressed in speech in a particular time and place. It should be noted that Saussure laid emphasis on the spoken language.

## Signifiant Vs Signifie

The study of meaning, according to Saussure can be approached from two sides. These are the things that signifies (i.e. the sound image), and the thing signified (i.e. the concept). The thing that signifies (ie the sound image) is the *signifiant* while the thing signified (ie the concept) is the *signifie*. The *signifiant* can be described as the *signifier* while the *signifie* is the *signified*. The relationship between the signified and the signifier produces the linguistic sign. It is the sign that provides the basis of communication within a community. That way, *langue*, the language system itself, is perceived to be a system of signs.

## Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Relationship

The sentence is a combination of signs, with each sound contributing to the total meaning. These signs are arranged in an acceptable way. Meaning in longer structures of utterances, is based on a definite sense of arrangement. If the relationship between signs is sequential, from left to right, we have a syntagmatic arrangement. When the relationship is vertical, highlighting the contrasts and choices to make between signs, we have the paradigmatic (or associative) relationship. These two levels of relationship can be illustrated below:



**paradigmatic**      **You** +      **should** +      **go.**  
                                  **I**    +      **May** +      **work.**

**C**

The relationship A                      B is syntagmatic ~~while~~ A    C is paradigmatic. Thus, a sentence is composed of *she + will + sing* etc.

Along the paradigmatic axis, we have contrasting choices among/*She, He, You and I*; /*will, can, should and may*/; and /*sing, play, go and work*/. The two dimensions of structure can apply to all levels of language – phonology, Lexis, syntax and semantics. The implication is that language is a vast network of interrelated structures which produce the linguistic system. There are many developments that have followed Saussure’s insights. These developments have produced some of the enduring schools of thought.

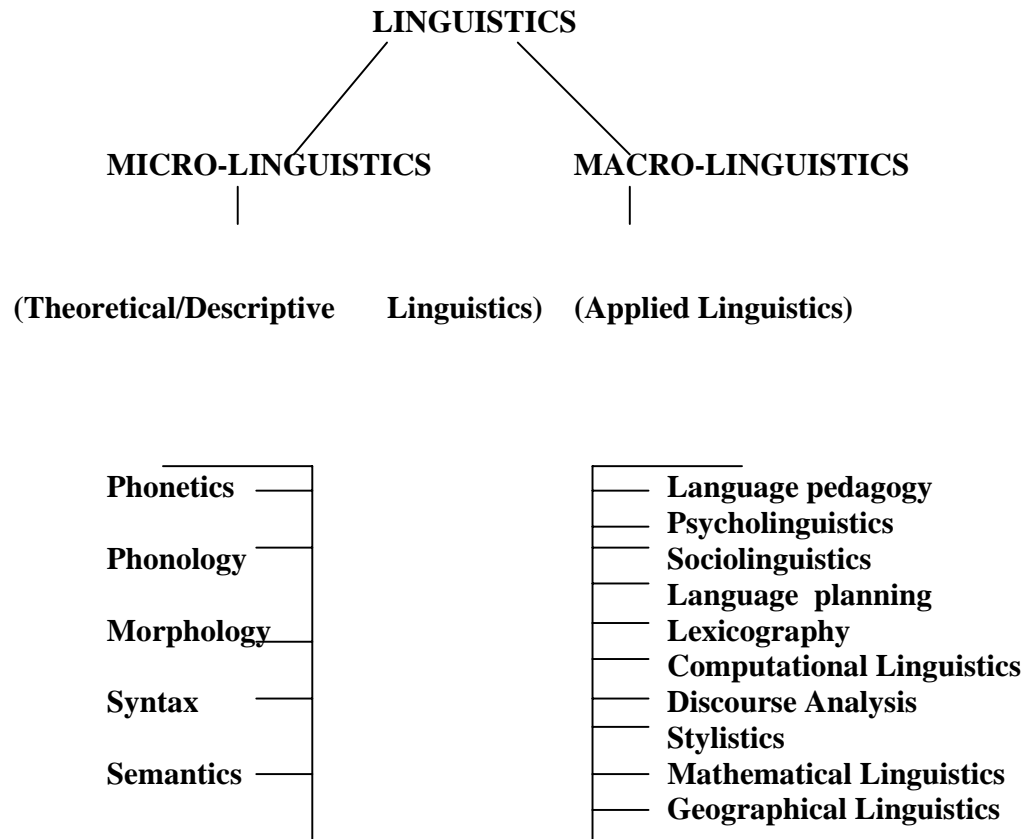
**III. LEVELS OF LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS**

It has been pointed out in Section I) that linguistics is the scientific study of language. The implication of the understanding of linguistics as scientific is that every segment of the discipline should be systematically studied. Interestingly, the focus of linguistics is Language. There are different levels to the study of language (especially human Language). Some levels relate to the internal structure of Language, while others relate to the extension of the application of knowledge of language. The first level which focuses on the internal structure of language is descriptive or theoretical. The second level is devoted to identifying practical applications of modern scientific linguistics. This level is referred to as applied linguistics. Applied linguistics in its widest sense is the application of theories of language to other disciplines with the aim of solving language-related problems. However, in a restricted sense much of the practical use of applied linguistics is in the area of language teaching and learning.

The theoretical or discipline aspect of linguistic analysis is referred to as *micro linguistics* while the practical dimension is *macro linguistics*. It should be noted that the terms, *micro linguistics* and *macro linguistics* are adopted from the social sciences – notably Economics.

**The Two Levels of Linguistics**

Two broad levels have been proposed for the study of linguistics. These levels have some other sub-levels. These two broad levels and their major components are presented below.



The use of the terms *micro linguistics* and *macro linguistics* has also been favoured by Sanusi (1996).

### **Brief Explanations of the Different Sub-Levels**

From the diagram above, we notice that within micro linguistics (ie-theoretical linguistics), we have phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. From macro linguistics (i.e. applied linguistics) derive language pedagogy, psycholinguistics, socio-linguistics, language planning, lexicography, computational linguistics, discourse analysis, stylistics, mathematical linguistics, geographical linguistics, etc.

Each of the sub-levels shall be explained briefly in the sections that follow.

## **Aspects of Theoretical Linguistics.**

### **Phonetics**

Phonetics is the study of the production, perception and description of speech sounds. The emphasis is on the activities of the parts of the body used in speech production (ie organs of speech), the movement of the sound waves through the ear and the physical qualities of individual sounds. Thus, phonetics has three main branches – articulatory phonetics (dealing with the activities of the organs of speech), auditory phonetics (concerned with the movement of sound waves into the ear), and acoustic phonetics (which relates to the physical characteristics of individual sounds. Details of these segments are presented in chapter

### **Phonology**

While phonetics deals with the production, perception and description of the sounds of human languages, phonology is concerned with the description of the sound systems and patterns of a particular language. Phonology is based on what speakers of a given language know about the sound patterns of their language. Such knowledge is usually unconscious. That means that phonology is concerned with the abstract aspects of the sounds of a language without regard to the physical properties of such sounds.

Since emphasis is on the patterns of sounds, phonology is concerned with the meaningful combinations of sounds to form larger structures. In phonological analysis an attempt is usually made to identify similarity and contrasts between sounds in their meaning making mechanism.

The study of phonology has been found to be useful in phonemics, phonotactics and prosody. Phonemics is the study of individual sound segments while phonotactics deals with the study of acceptable combinations of sounds in a language. Prosody, on the other hand relates to such items as stress, intonation, rhythm, rhyme, juncture, etc. There are other sections of this book and subsequent ones that dwell much more on these aspects.

## Morphology

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words with emphasis on those units that make up words. Thus, morphology can be explained as the process of word formation. Words are built from different minimal meaningful units of language called *morphemes*. There are some words made up of simple morphemes as *men, tall, happy* and *feet*. There are also others made up of two morphemes as – *girlfriend, housegirl, classroom, headlamp*. Some other words consist of more than two morphemes – eg *un-educate-d, dis-connect-ion*.

There are two types of morphemes. These are *free* and *bound* morphemes. Free morphemes can exist as full words with their own meaning – as in *boy, teach, run, worm, mate, house, beer, meat, etc*. It is possible to combine two free morphemes to form compound words as in the following examples:

*Beermeat, roommate, houseboy, etc.*

Bound morphemes are attached to free morphemes to achieve a change in meaning. When this happens, we have complex words. Bound morphemes occur as *prefixes, infixes* and *suffixes*. Prefixes are attached before the free morphemes as in the following examples:

	<b>Prefix</b>		<b>free morpheme</b>
-	<u>un</u> -	necessary	unnecessary
-	<u>dis</u> -	loyal	disloyal
-	<u>mal</u> -	treat	maltreat
-	<u>en</u> -	circle	encircle
-	<u>pre</u> -	determine	predetermine

Suffixes are attached after the free morphemes they associate with. Witness the following examples:

<b>Free Morpheme</b>		<b>suffix</b>	
correct -		ness -	correctness
dismiss -		al -	dismissal



language produce the accepted combinations for the structure of the sentence. Such a structure is the word order. In languages like English, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, the word order is *Subject, Verb, Object* (ie SVO). In Ijo and Japanese, it is *Subject, Object, Verb* (ie, SOV). For such other languages as Arabic, Egyptian and Hebrew, the word order is *Verb, Subject Object* (ie. VSO). No language has been discovered with the *Object, Verb, Subject* (OVS) word order.

In modern linguistics, the study of syntax has been central to Transformational Generative Grammar. Within this framework, the two rules of syntax are the Phrase Structure and Transformational rules. While phrase structure rules specify the logical arrangements, of sentence elements in terms of phrases and words, transformational rules explain the different movement processes of elements of the sentence to achieve varieties. A lot more about morphology and syntax will be explained in future volumes of this series.

### **Semantics**

Semantics appears to be a neglected aspect of linguistics because of the doubt over the possibility of studying meaning objectively. Indeed, semantics is the study of meaning in natural language. It examines the relationship between words and the concepts they refer to. It also studies the meaning possibilities of structures above the word.

One major approach in the study of word meaning is the process of sense relations or lexical relations in which such issues as similarity and contrast are discussed. Thus, words are profitably studied, using *synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, hyponymy*, etc. Sentences are also studied using *ambiguity, vagueness, entailment, presupposition, implication*, etc. These concepts will be explained in subsequent volumes of this series.

### **Aspects of macro linguistics**

As already noted in the diagram specifying branches of Linguistics above, macro linguistics is also referred to as Applied Linguistics. While theoretical, cognitive or micro linguistics provides the tools for the analysis of language, Applied Linguistics

utilises the techniques and methodology of such tools to the solution of human problems that are language – related. Some of such solutions are based on educational, political, social or economic policies. There are others that are concerned with how to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

It is perhaps in the area of language teaching and learning that the full implications of Applied Linguistics manifest most profoundly. However, for a richer appreciation of the concept of Applied Linguistics, there is usually the need to explore the relationship between linguistics and other disciplines. that relationship has yielded such other interesting areas of Applied Linguistics as – *Sociolinguistics, Geographical Linguistics, Historical Linguistics, Psycholinguistics Anthropological Linguistics, Dialectology, Neurolinguistics, Computational Linguistics, Pedagogical Linguistics*, (under which we have second language learning and foreign language learning), *Stylistics, Discourse Analysis, Text linguistics, etc.* The most prominent aspect of Applied Linguistics is second language or foreign language learning. Second language learning research has been devoted to the processes of attaining proficiency in another language different from the mother tongue.

Another important segment of Applied Linguistics is Sociolinguistics. It is the study of the relationship between language and society. This relationship explains why there are variations in language use between different users of the same language. Issues of variation in language use have been explained in *Dialectology, Geographical Linguistics, and Variation studies*. There is also Psycholinguistics. This is the relationship between linguistics and psychology. The emphasis is usually on the strategies for language acquisition. Indeed, one of the psychological manifestations of the normal human being is the ability to speak a language. Whatever shortfall in this capacity is explained within psycholinguistics. In serious cases of language impairment, there is usually the understanding that the nervous system of which the brain is the major component cannot process language. In explaining the malfunctioning of the brain in language behaviour, reference is often made to Neurolinguistics. Indeed, Neurolinguistics examines the impact of the nervous system on language behaviour.

## **Conclusion**

What has been offered in this chapter is a summary of some of the elements of linguistics. There is the belief that subsequent chapters and other volumes of this series will offer a much richer explanation of the different aspects of the intriguing field of linguist

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**UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS**  
**SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF: -----**

**PROGRESS/SUPERVISOR'S REPORT FORM IN RESPECT OF M.PHILL/PH.D.  
CANDIDATES 20.../20.....**

**SECTION A**

**Particulars of the Candidate**

- i. **Name of Candidate:**  
.....
- ii. **Department:** .....
- iii. **Degree in View:** .....
- iv. **field of Study:**  
.....
- v. **Date of First Registration:** .....
- vi. **Proposed Title of Thesis/Dissertation:**  
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**SECTION B**

**Result of Course - Work Examination**

<u>Course Code</u>	<u>Numbers of Units</u>	<u>Grades</u>
<u>Grade Unit</u>		
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**SECTION C**

**A Critical Evaluation of the Research**

**i. Originality of the**

**Work:**.....  
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**ii. Evidence of Competence in the field of Study:**

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**iii. Interim Assessment of Candidate’s Critical Judgement:**

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**iv. Potential Worth of the Content of the Research Material for Purpose of Publication: ..**

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**v. Potentiality for Contribution to Knowledge:**

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**SECTION D**

**An Assessment of Progress in the Research During the Period including Any Serious Delay or Very Rapid Progress in the Student’s Work:**

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**SECTION E**

**Particulars of the Supervisor**

**i. Name..... ii**  
**Status.....**  
**iii. Department: ..... iv. Signature:**  
**.....**  
**.....**  
**v. Date: .....**