Historical Approach to Linguistics: Origination and Types

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Annotation. The article deals with background information about linguistics, its origination and development until today. Moreover, main types of linguistics and their description were noted.

Key words: linguistics encompass, synchronically, diachronicially, Sanskrit, analytic approach, unintuitive structure, non-autonomy, diachronic linguistics.

Linguistics is the scientific study of language, involving analysis of language form, language meaning, and language in context. Language use was first systematically documented in Mesopotamia, with extant lexical lists of the 3rd to the 2nd Millenia BCE, offering glossaries on Sumerian cuneiform usage and meaning, and phonetical vocabularies of foreign languages. Later, Sanskrit would be systematically analysed, and its rules described, by Pāṇini (fl. 6-4th century BCE), in the Indus Valley. Beginning around the 4th century BCE, Warring States period China also developed its own grammatical traditions. Aristotle laid the foundation of Western linguistics as part of the study of rhetoric in his Poetics ca. 335 BC. Traditions of Arabic grammar and Hebrew grammar developed during the middle Ages in a religious context like Pānini's Sanskrit grammar. Modern approaches began to develop in the 18th century, eventually being regarded in the 19th century as belonging to the disciplines of psychology or biology, with such views establishing the foundation of mainstream Anglo-American linguistics, although in England philological approaches such as that of Henry Sweet tended to predominate. This was contested in the early 20th century by Ferdinand de Saussure, who established linguistics as an autonomous discipline within social sciences. Following Saussure's concept, general linguistics consists of the study of language as a semiotic system, which includes the subfields of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Each of these subfields can be approached either synchronically or diachronicially.

Today, linguistics encompasses a large number of scientific approaches and has developed still more subfields, including applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and computational linguistics[1]. Linguistics, or at least the current version practiced today, has its origins in Iron Age India with the analysis of Sanskrit. The Pratishakhyas (from ca. the 8th century BC) constitute as it were a proto-linguistic ad hoc collection of observations about mutations to a given corpus particular to a given Vedic school. Systematic study of these texts gives rise to the Vedanga discipline of Vyakarana, the earliest surviving account

of which is the work of Pāṇini (c. 520 – 460 BC), who, however, looks back on what are probably several generations of grammarians, whose opinions he occasionally refers to. Pāṇini formulates close to 4,000 rules which together form a complete and extremely compact generative grammar of Sanskrit. Inherent in his analytic approach are the concepts of the phoneme, the morpheme and the root. A consequence of his grammar's focus on brevity is its highly unintuitive structure, reminiscent of contemporary "machine language" (as opposed to "human readable" programming languages). His sophisticated logical rules and technique have been widely influential in ancient and modern linguistics [2]. Indian linguistics maintained a high level for several centuries; Patanjali in the 2nd century BC still actively criticizes Panini. In the early centuries BC, however, Panini's grammar came to be seen as prescriptive and later commentators became fully dependent on it. Bhartrihari (c. 450 – 510) theorized the act of speech as being made up of four stages: first, conceptualization of an idea, second, its verbalization and sequencing and third, delivery of speech into atmospheric air, all these by the speaker and last, the comprehension of speech by the listener, the interpreter.

In the Middle East, the Persian linguist Sibawayh made a detailed and professional description of Arabic in 760, in his monumental work, Al-kitab fi al-nahw , The Book on Grammar), bringing many linguistic aspects of language to light. In his book he distinguished phonetics from phonology. Western linguistics begins in Classical Antiquity with grammatical speculation such as Plato's Cratylus, but remains far behind the achievements of ancient Indian grammarians until the 19th century, when Indian literature begins to become available in Europe. An early 19th century linguist was Jakob Grimm, who devised the principle of consonantal shifts in pronunciation known as Grimm's Law in 1822, Karl Verner, who discovered Verner's Law, August Schleicher, who created the "Stammbaumtheorie" and Johannes Schmidt, who developed the "Wellentheorie" ("wave model") in 1872. Ferdinand de Saussure was the founder of modern structural linguistics. Edward Sapir, a leader in American structural linguistics, was one of the first who explored the relations between language studies and anthropology. His methodology had strong influence on all his successors. Noam Chomsky's formal model of language, transformational-generative grammar, developed under the influence of his teacher Zellig Harris, who was in turn strongly influenced by Leonard Bloomfield, has been the dominant model since the 1960s[3].

Chomsky remains by far the most influential linguist in the world today. Linguists working in frameworks such as Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG) or Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG) stress the importance of formalization and formal rigor in linguistic description, and may distance themselves somewhat from Chomsky's more recent work (the "Minimalist" program for Transformational grammar), connecting more closely to earlier work of Chomsky's. Linguists working in Optimality Theory state generalizations in terms of violable rules, which is a greater departure from mainstream linguistics, and linguists working in various kinds of functional grammar and Cognitive Linguistics tend to stress the non-autonomy of linguistic knowledge and the non-universality of linguistic structures, thus departing importantly from the Chomskyan paradigm. There are some types of linguistics. Now, we will learn some types.

➢ Contextual linguistics may include the study of linguistics in interaction with other academic disciplines. While in core theoretical linguistics language is studied

independently, the interdisciplinary areas of linguistics consider how language interacts with the rest of the world.

➢ Sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, and linguistic anthropology are social sciences that consider the interactions between linguistics and society as a whole.

➢ Psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics combine medical science and linguistics. Other cross-disciplinary areas of linguistics include language acquisition, evolutionary linguistics, computational linguistics and cognitive science.

Theoretical linguistics is concerned with finding and describing generalities both within particular languages and among all languages. Applied linguistics takes the results of those findings and applies them to other areas. Often applied linguistics refers to the use of linguistic research in language teaching, but results of linguistic research are used in many other areas, as well. Many areas of applied linguistics today involve the explicit use of computers. Speech synthesis and speech recognition use phonetic and phonemic knowledge to provide voice interfaces to computers [4]. Applications of computational linguistics in machine translation, computer-assisted translation, and natural language processing are extremely fruitful areas of applied linguistics which have come to the forefront in recent years with increasing computing power. Their influence has had a great effect on theories of syntax and semantics, as modelling syntactic and semantic theories on computers constrains the theories to computable operations and provides a more rigorous mathematical basis. Whereas the core of theoretical linguistics is concerned with studying languages at a particular point in time (usually the present), diachronic linguistics examines how language changes through time, sometimes over centuries. Historical linguistics enjoys both a rich history (the study of linguistics grew out of historical linguistics) and a strong theoretical foundation for the study of language change. In universities in the United States, the non-historic perspective seems to have the upper hand. Many introductory linguistics classes, for example, cover historical linguistics only cursorily. The shift in focus to a non-historic perspective started with Saussure and became predominant with Noam Chomsky. Explicitly historical perspectives include historical-comparative linguistics and etymology.

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