

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS AS A FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE IN HUMANITIES: AN OVERVIEW**Zahid Bashir Lone*, Sameer Ahmad Kuchay** & Hilal Ahmad Dar*****

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Abstract:

Linguistics as a scientific study of language endeavors to describe and explain the human faculty of language. It also studies how language is acquired by the children, how it gets bloomed in adults, what are the different roles that language has to play in the society and also how languages survive and die. Even if the discipline does not emerge as a separate discipline for a long time. What is interesting for us is that the interest for the language was always alive. Linguistic study was originally motivated by the correct description of classical languages, notably that of Sanskrit grammar, or by the development of logic and rhetoric in Ancient Greece. Modern linguistics began to develop in the 18th century, reaching the "golden age of "philology" in the 19th century, with work almost entirely centering on Indo-European languages and leading to a highly elaborate and consistent reconstruction of the proto-Indo-European languages. The first half of the 20th century was marked by the structuralist school, based on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure in Europe and Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield in the United States. The 1960s saw the rise of many new fields in linguistics, such as Noam Chomsky's generative grammar, William Labov's sociolinguistics, Michael Halliday's Systemic functional Grammar and also modern psycholinguistics. The present paper is an attempt to discuss the recent developments which have taken place in linguistics and have contributed to its importance and made it as an emerging field of knowledge and made it quite relevant in present times looking at its potential and application and an addition to an already existing body of knowledge.

Key Words: Structuralism, Generative Grammar & Psycholinguistics

Introduction:

Linguistics, the scientific study of language does not study any particular language but identifies and establishes the principles and rules, features and processes that are universal, and can be applied for understanding all languages. Language is essentially a form of human behavior. Therefore a systematic study of human behavior may help us to understand the language also. Man has been characterized in different ways and one of the defining descriptions is that man is a 'taking being'. Human speech shows complexities similar to those found in social behavior. His verbal behavior can therefore, be studied from different angles leading to different branches of linguistics or simply in terms of structure and composition of the tool he uses every waking hour of his life language in itself. The strict scientific approach to language looks at it in the same way that other activities of man treated by other discipline. A scientific analysis of language is carried out systematically on the basis of objectively verifiable observations and within the framework of some general theory of language structure, 'says s.k verma. He further adds that the test of validity of a linguistic theory is whether it provides the means for satisfactory description and explanation of the facts of language. The fundamental assumption underlying general linguistics is that language have certain semantic features and abstract formal properties in common; that they are all culturally determined variations on a finite set of universals. The aim of general linguistics is to bring out this rich uniformity underlying surface diversities. (i) to arrive at the statements of rules that form the basis of a person's ability to speak and comprehend a particular language ii) to provide a framework within which the grammar of any natural language can be described and iii) to arrive at a statement of the rules of universal grammar, by studying a variety of human languages and also the human organization.

Evolutionary Perspective:

Linguistics was not studied as a separate subject and had not received any importance till 18th century even if the scholars were working on it and the interest was always alive there. The evolution of linguistics as a discipline goes hand in hand with the evolution of philosophy of science. A critical turning point in the history of linguistics took place at the end of 18th century when William Jones suggested that there was a historical connection between Sanskrit, Latin and Greek. This paved the beginning of comparative linguistics. Linguists looked for similarities languages and they suspected the origin of a common mother language from which all languages in the world might have evolved through the centuries. Historical linguistics seems to be one that had been influenced by this trend.

Sir William Jones:

The most repeated passage in linguistic history is Sir William Jones' (1746–1794) statement in 1786:

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologist could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists. (Jones 1798: 422–3) Based on this, Jones is usually credited with founding comparative linguistics and discovering the relationship among Indo-European languages. However, this is a most unfortunate misreading of the history of linguistics. Jones neither initiated the comparative method nor discovered Indo-European, as a comparison of a remarkably similar quote from Andreas Jager in 1686, one hundred years earlier, reveals:

An ancient language, once spoken in the distant past in the area of the Caucasus mountains and spreading by waves of migration throughout Europe and Asia, had itself ceased to be spoken and had left no linguistic monuments behind, but had as a "mother" generated a host of "daughter languages," many of which in turn had become "mothers" to further "daughters." (For a language tends to develop dialects, and these dialects in the course of time become independent, mutually unintelligible

languages.) Descendants of the ancestral languages include Persian, Greek, Italic the Slavonic languages, Celtic, and finally Gothic and the other Germanic tongues.

Ferdinand de- Saussure:

The field was revolutionized Swiss Linguist, who had the vision to see a larger role for his subject. Saussure sometimes is called as the father of 'Modern Linguistics'. He never published any major work on linguistics. However after his death his students collected together his lecture notes and published them in a small volume in 1916.under the title 'Cours De Linguistique Generale (A course in General Linguistics). Despite its slimness it had and continues to have a seminal influence on linguistics. Saussure compared a language to the game of chess in which piece is defined by both its situation on the board and its relationship with the other pieces. Saussure made very valuable contribution to linguistics. His contribution to linguistics helped it to form a separate independent branch of language study. We can summarize Saussure's contribution to linguistics as follows.

Langue and Parole:

Langue: Saussure has introduced these two terms to distinguish the sense of the word 'language'. .Language refers to the language system shared by native speaker of a language. In other words 'langue' means the abstract knowledge of the language which Saussure feels is known by the social group of particular language community. .in some respect 'Langue is similar to Chomsky's term 'Competence'. Chomsky's 'Competence' refers to the abstract knowledge of the native speaker about the language. According to Chomsky native speaker knows the rules of language intuitively. This abstract knowledge is in the mind of the native speaker where Saussure places it in a society that uses a language. The concept of langue is inevitably tied up with Saussure's view of language as a sign system in which words are symbolically related to events, processes and things in the outside world. The concept of langue emphasizes the systematic relationship between items in a language when viewed as a vast signaling system. These operate at all levels such as semantic, syntactic and phonological level. The notion of langue emphasizes the importance of language as a social phenomenon. This again makes it different from the Chomsky's term 'competence' where the tendency to see language as a biological and genetically inherited faculty.

Parole: The term 'Parole' refers to the actual use of language by the speaker of a particular social group. 'Parole' is in some respect similar to Chomsky's term performance. Term performance refers to the actual use of language by the native speaker .parole is dependent on langue as performance is dependent on competence. Parole specifies the users linguistic behavior i. e. what they do with language where as Chomsky's performance specifies the individual's use of language. Saussure also gave the concept of sign, signifier and signified

The term sign is frequently used by people studying communication theory to characterize the way in which meaning is communicated symbolically via certain objects within individual cultures. Thus, the cross operates as a sign within Christian culture. Saussure is closely associated with the concept of linguistic sign. He argued that word comprised two elements a sound image i.e. a pronunciation form or signifier and a meaning or sense(termed as the signified) so to use the example for example the word apple is made up of a sound image or signifier /epil/ and a sense(or signified) indicating mental concept. The relation between them is conventional not a natural one. There is no reason why society calls it as an apple.

The following tree diagram will clarify the notion sign, signifier, signified

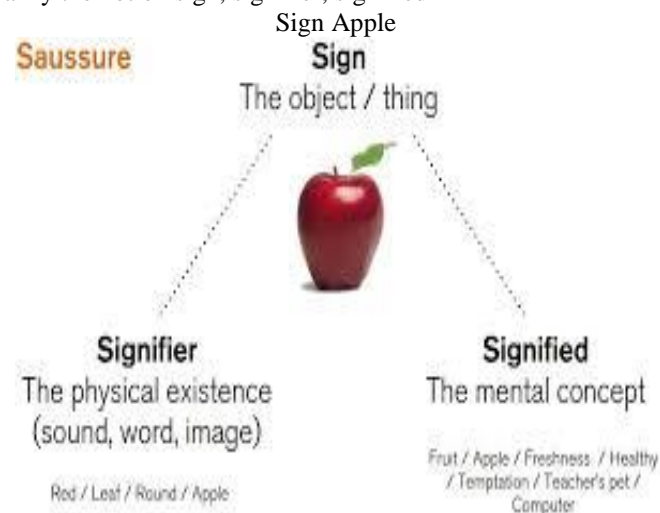


Diagram for the sign of an apple

Noam Chomsky:

Noam Chomsky's has contributed to the field of linguistics and had discarded behaviorism when he reviewed B.F Skinner's book "Verbal Behavior" and said that language is not something which is acquired because of imitation and habit formation but there is an innate faculty which enables us to acquire language. That means the faculty of language is hard wired in everyone or there is a specific device in humans LAD (language acquisition device) which makes humans able to acquire language.

Current situation and development trend of applied linguistics:

Although we say applied linguistics belongs to the subject with extensive research scope, it occupies an irreplaceable important position in contemporary linguistic researches to a large extent and owns great practicability value. Applied linguistics has interdisciplinary and permeability. Besides, it changes and develops with social changes, so it owns dynamic nature. Therefore, we analyze development trend of applied linguistics.

- ✓ Applied linguistics continuously pushes out and establishes new theories. Applied linguistics becomes a relatively independent subject after development for some time. Many linguists and applied linguists establish many new theories, including cognitive theory. Cognitive theory pushes applied linguistics study to a new height. So, applied linguistics study has developed to the stage of cognitive theory and social constructivist theory. They represent relatively advanced linguistic research theories in the world. Cognitive theory school plays an important promotion role for development of applied linguistics. It advocates learners' learning subjectivity and creativity and considers language study is an active activity process. Learners are required to think independently through self-observation and exploration and finally master an inquiry-based learning method. But, cognitive theory neglects researched on nonintellectual factors. It regards foreign language learning as an isolated individual behavior and overlooks environmental factors in learning and especially socio-cultural environment where learners are in. Social constructivist theory makes up for this shortcoming. It stresses equal importance of social environment and cultural knowledge and holds knowledge acquisition is the result of learners' contact and interactions in specific social environment. It has great enlightenment on linguistics teaching practice and theoretical teaching and provides a new opportunity for applied linguistics development.
- ✓ The development process of applied linguistics is human socialization process. Because social constructivist theory regards language as an important constituent part of social semantic system, language learners are important members in whole social group. Their ways of thinking and learning strategies will be restricted and influenced by specific social culture and social norms. From this perspective, learners' specific socio-cultural background and learning environment are closely related to cultivation and improvement of their language cognition competence. That is, interactions between learners and their surroundings will ultimately result in development of language cognition competence and language competence. In foreign language teaching, the process of interactions between teachers and students and among students is actually language knowledge accumulation or construction process from the perspective of applied linguistics. Besides, it is also a process of cultivation and improvement of learners' language competence. In this process, learner's level can be classified into existing development level and potential development level. The space between the two is the zone of proximal development. Only when learners surpass this zone can they acquire new language competence. So, the zone of proximal development is the key for learners to gain and apply language knowledge. Moreover, learners must interact with society based on their existing knowledge so as to drive development of their language knowledge and ability. Besides, they can test their new knowledge and new ability, and cultivate their cooperative learning consciousness and ability. This cannot just help learners gain knowledge, but promote improvement of their psychological health and comprehensive quality.
- ✓ The development of applied linguistics requires knowing social cultures of various countries. Research and development trend of applied linguistics need to improve learners' social and culture consciousness, and attach importance to socio-cultural background of target language countries so as to provide a, interactive and penetrative possibility platform for language study and application. Applied linguistics is a multi-disciplinary aggregation and involves a wide range, and the research fields are complex and diversified. In view of these, in foreign language teaching, we should introduce more teaching theories in teaching process on the basis of comprehensiveness, openness and scientificity of applied linguistics so as to make foreign language teaching process more diversified and teaching strategies more flexible and make linguistic theory reflect its huge values in actual teaching process. Actually, in language learning process, language learners not just need to cooperate with their cognitive competence and emotional factors, but also need certain support from learning environment and socio-cultural environment. The organic combination of the two can really promote learners to improve their language competence. From this perspective, the development trend of applied linguistics will be a fusion of cognitive theory and social constructivist theory. Such development trend has great enlightenment for theoretical and practical research of applied linguistics. To be more specific, it will facilitate research category of applied linguistics to turn to diversified theoretical research mode from unary theoretical research mode and carry out a series of cooperative researches with interdisciplinary subjects and realize innovation of new research modes and methods. Besides, it will make research fields of applied linguistics become wide, continuously update foreign language teaching idea and teaching mode and make foreign language teacher face larger teaching pressure. Additionally, applied linguistics will make China's foreign language teaching become the research core of social educational circle under international background, and propose higher requirements and expectations for foreign language teachers. In particular, cooperative study of cross-school, cross -subject and cross-major experts and scholars will become an inevitable development trend.

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