Linguistics: Its Origin and Development as A Discipline

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Abstract
Language had to have developed around some 1,50,000 years ago, before the study of linguistics. Linguistic study of that developing language dates back to around 6000 years ago when the written word was found through evidence of that time. There is therefore more evidence about the history and origin of linguistics compared to development of oral language.

This paper documents the use and study of language in order to uncover the origin and development of the discipline of linguistics. It traces its origin from the confluence of the two known continents Europe and Asia, in Mesopotamia. There is also evidence of the importance of subcontinental India in the birth and development of the study of linguistics, before a further discussion of its developmental history around the world is dealt with.

Keywords: Language, Linguistics, cultural, philology, phonology, morphology, etymology, Sanskrit

INTRODUCTION:

Linguistics is the scientific study of language[1]. It involves analysis of language form, meaning, and context.

Since linguistics is scrutiny and investigation of human language, it is a comprehensive, systematic, objective, and precise study. Its primary goal is to understand the nature of language in general through query. Such must have happened when human curiosity developed long after the advent of language.

Linguistics encompasses the analysis of every aspect of language, as well as the methods for studying and modelling that study. We specifically look at the origin, to find out how this study first came about and why.

Towards that effort, the focus is on theories of language structure, variation and use, the description and documentation of contemporary languages, and the implications of theories of language for an understanding of the mind and brain, human culture, social behaviour, and language learning and teaching.

Linguistics therefore roughly follows the course of human cultural evolution, the emigration of communities and growth of interest. The study of linguistics and its history of growth and development has had to delve deep to uncover historical facts through phonology and phonetics — the study of the sound systems of languages, morphology and syntax to do with internal structure of words and sentences. Then, there is the meaning behind words and combination of words through semantics.

THE PROBLEM/ OBJECTIVE OF STUDY.

To report on the origin and development of the discipline of linguistics. Researched evidence indicates abilities, such as the period when human sensibilities began to grow an interest in the science and art of linguistics. We chart its growth. India provides much historical information, along with the other growth areas mentioned.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Keith Allan has done some commendable works on the western classical tradition in linguistics. There are also some notable works by Roy Harris, Talbot J. Taylor on linguistic thought of the Western Tradition starting from Socrates to Saussure; works of John E. Joseph, Nigel Love, Talbot J. Taylor on the western linguistic thought tradition in the Twentieth Century. W. P. Lehmann had also contributed on nineteenth century historical Indo-European

Linguistics. Bimal Krishna Matilal had done a commendable task on India's contribution to the study of Language. *The History of Linguistics* by Frederick J. Newmeyer, *Invitation to Linguistics* by Mario Pei, *A Short History of Linguistics* by Robert Henry Robins, *Western linguistics: An historical introduction by* Pieter A. M. Seuren are some praiseworthy works in the field of linguistics. Kees Versteegh has done commendable task in the Arabic Linguistic Tradition. John E. Joseph has done a detailed work in his *From Whitney to Chomsky: Essays in the History of American Linguistics*.

CONCEPTS AND HYPOTHESIS:
In antiquity, there arose a need to disambiguate discourse, as in ritual text or argument. This often led to explorations of sound-meaning mappings. The conventional versus naturalistic origins for these symbols were debated. That led to the processes by which larger structures are formed from units.

I. Starting in the area known as Babylonia in southern Mesopotamia in what is now Iraq, language began to be systematically documented between the third to the second millennia BCE. It lasted over 2500 years. The linguistic texts from the earliest parts of the tradition were lists of nouns in Sumerian[2] (a language with no known genetic relatives), the language of religious and legal texts of the time.

II. In ancient India Linguistics was studied in order to recite and interpret Vedic texts. The oldest Indian text, the Rigveda, *vāk* ("speech") is deified. By 1200 BCE their oral performance became standardized. Sanskrit was split into compounded words, stems, and phonetic units, providing an impetus for morphology and phonetics.

Sanskrit was the formal language of the subcontinent and its systematic analysis, or linguistic study would be carried out. Linguistic rules were described and studied, albeit among a select few led by the earliest Indian scholar Pāṇini, possibly sometime between the 6-4th century BCE. It was Pāṇini who wrote a rule-based description of Sanskrit in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*[3].

The Pāṇinian school provides a list of 2000 verb roots which form the objects on which these rules are applied, a list of sounds (the so-called *Śiva-sūtra*s), and a list of 260 words not derivable by the rules. It was their ability to map these from morpheme to semantics that is considered truly remarkable.

More scholars would emerge. There were Śākaṭāyana and the etymologist Yāska. He provided four categories of words—nouns, verbs, pre-verbs, and particles/invariants—and a test for nouns both concrete and abstract. However, Pāṇini would oppose the Yāska view that sentences are primary. He proposed a grammar to compose semantics from morphemic roots through some 4000 sutras. Grammarians following Pāṇini include Kātyāyana (c. 3rd century BCE), Patañjali (2nd century BCE), known for his commentary on selected topics in Pāṇini's grammar (the *Mahābhāṣya*) and on Kātyāyana's aphorisms.

Of the six canonical texts or *Vedāṅga*s that formed the core syllabus in Brahminic education from the 1st century CE until the 18th century, four dealt with language. There was *Śikṣā* dealing with phonetics and phonology (*sandhi*), *Chandas* for prosody or meter, *Vyākaraṇa* specifying grammar, and *Nirukta* dealing with etymology.

Bhartṛhari around 500 CE introduced a philosophy of meaning with his *sphoṭa* doctrine. The Pali Grammar of Kaccāyana, dated to the early centuries CE, describes the language of the Buddhist canon.

Over the next few centuries, it would lead to a systematic alphabet, *Brāhmī*, for the Sanskrit language. Early interest in India's contribution came from William Dwight Whitney[4] during the nineteenth century. He was known for his work on Sanskrit grammar and Vedic philology as well as opinion about the social dissemination of Sanskrit.

III. China had also developed its own grammatical traditions. Archaic Chinese is first evidenced through oracle bones[5] sometime around 1250 BCE, but later carved on Bronze and in Seal scripts.

Chinese philology, or Chinese elementary studies began as an aid to understanding classics in the Han dynasty (c. 3rd century BCE). Shuowen Jiezi (c. 2nd century BCE), the first Chinese dictionary, classifies Chinese

characters by radicals, a practice that would be followed by most subsequent lexicographers. More pioneering works were produced during the Han Dynasty.

As in ancient Greece, early Chinese thinkers were concerned with the relationship between names and reality. Confucius (6th century BCE) famously emphasized the moral commitment implicit in a name, stating that "If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things."

Later Mohists or the group known as School of Names (ming jia, 479-221 BCE), consider that ming (name) may refer to three kinds of shi (actuality) or reality. The philosophy is similar to the famous paradox "a white horse is not a horse".

Xun Zi's (3rd century BCE) principle was also to correctly reflect reality. Study of phonology in China began late, and was influenced by the Indian tradition once Buddhism reached China. Philological studies flourished during the Qing Dynasty. But it was Zhang Binglin, who helped lay the foundation of modern Chinese linguistics. The Western comparative method was brought into China by Bernard Karlgren. The first treatise on Chinese grammar was produced by Ma Jianzhong late in the 19th century at the same time as in the west. Accordingly, it was based on the Latin model.

IV. The Greeks developed an alphabet using symbols from the Phoenicians, adding signs for vowels and for extra consonants appropriate to their idiom (Robins, 1997)[6]. In earlier Greek writing systems sound combinations therefore indicated syllables. Addition of vowels was a major breakthrough. As a result of the introduction of writing and poetry was facilitated, as with Homeric poems.
Along with written speech, the Greeks commenced studying grammatical and philosophical issues. The works of Plato contain discussion about the nature and origins of language. Aristotle laid the foundation of Western linguistics as part of the study of rhetoric in his Poetics ca. 335 BCE[7].

Aristotle supports the conventional origins of meaning. He defined the logic of speech and of the argument. His works on rhetoric and poetics led to an understanding of tragedy, poetry,

public discussions and more in the written form. Aristotle's work on logic interrelates with his special interest in language. He divides forms of speech as being either simple, as a single word, or having composition, e.g., "the horse runs."

He distinguishes between a subject and predication. The categories are not abstract platonic entities but are found in speech. In *de Interpretatione*[8], Aristotle analyses categoric propositions, and thereby draws basic conclusions on the routine issues of classifying and defining basic linguistic forms.

The first Ptolemy who ruled ancient Alexandria in the 3rd century BC was most likely tutored by Aristotle. This has never been documented, though it is also possible that Aristotle's library was brought to Alexandria.

Alexandrians studied speech sounds and prosody and defined parts of speech as nouns and verbs, etc. Analogy in language was discussed, supporting the view that language and especially morphology is based on analogy or paradigm, whereas scholars in Asia Minor consider that language is not based on analogical bases but rather on exceptions.

Alexandrian research showed interest in meter and its role in poetry. The metrical "feet" in the Greek was based on the length of time taken to pronounce each syllable, marking long or short syllables to distinguish them from long and short vowels. The Greek word *Gramma* meant letter. The text was possibly the earliest Greek grammar, meaning "Art of letters" and written by Dionysius Thrax (170 – 90 BCE)[9]. It was intended as a pedagogic guide (as was Pāṇini in India),

Rules of syntax, syntax, semantics, morphology, prosody, orthography, dialectology, and more would follow among Alexandrian grammatists. Many compiled dictionaries, thesauri and lists of special old words such as those related to medicine or botany.

Greek functioned as a lingua franca; a language spoken throughout southern Europe.
Stoicism as a philosophy developed in Italy in early 3rd century BC. The Stoics made linguistics an important part of their system of

the cosmos and humanity. Their linguistic sign-terms would be adopted later by Ferdinand de Saussure. His ideas laid a foundation for many significant developments in both linguistics and semiotics in the 20th century[10].

In the Greco-Roman world during the 4th century, Aelius Donatus compiled Latin grammar, *Ars Grammatica*, the defining text through the Middle Ages. A smaller version, *Ars Minor*, covered eight parts of speech; it was only printed when book printing began in the 15th century. The grammar was attested in English since 1176.

IV. Traditions of Arabic and Hebrew grammar developed during the Middle Ages in a religious context.
In the Islamic grammatical tradition during its rapid expansion in the 8th century, populations would learn Arabic as a lingua franca. Earliest grammatical treatises on Arabic were mostly authored by non-native speakers. Abd Allāh ibn Abī Isḥāq al-Ḥaḍramī was considered the first grammarian of the Arabic language, beginning in that 8th century. The learning imparted by three generations of Arab grammarians culminated in the book of the Persian linguist Sibāwayhi towards the end of the same century. He describes the rules in detail in a monumental book on grammar in *Al-kitab fi al-nahw*, distinguishing phonetics from phonology[11].

V. Europe's first non-classical etymological and encyclopaedic dictionary was from Ireland. The concept of universal grammar would only emerge in the 13th century. In *De vulgari eloquentia* ("On the Eloquence of Vernacular")[12] by Dante. expanded the scope of linguistic enquiry from Latin/Greek to languages of the day.

Focus grew on linguistics during the Renaissance and Baroque period, during Jesuit Bible translations by the Jesuits. It was related to philosophical morality and the origin of language. Franciscus Juniuns, Lambert ten Kate from Amsterdam and George Hickes from England are considered to be the founding fathers of German linguistics. In Holland it was Joannes Goropius Becanus was the oldest representative of Dutch linguistics, the first to publish a prayer in Gothic[13].

VI. Modern linguistics only emerged in the late 18th century, and the Romantic or animist theses of Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Christoph Adelung remained influential well into the 19th century.

American indigenous languages were never written, and consequently, were lost, their linguistic roots buried. Anthropologists such as Franz Boas[14] tried to prescribe sound methodical principles for the analysis of unfamiliar languages.

During 18th century America, conjectural history was in progress regarding the origin and progress of language. These thinkers may have erroneously labelled some languages as "primitive" relative to the English language.

In the 18th century James Burnett, Lord Monboddo[15] analysed numerous languages and deduced logical elements of the evolution of human languages. Today he is considered to be a founder of modern comparative historical linguistics, linking it with biological evolution. In his *The Sanscrit Language* (1786), Sir William Jones proposed that Sanskrit and Persian had resemblances to Classical Greek, Latin, Gothic, and Celtic languages.

European linguistics now began to focus on the comparative history of the Indo-European languages, looking for common roots and tracing development. In 1786 it was discovered that there is a regular sound that corresponded in the languages spoken in Europe, India, and Persia on account of a common ancestor. During the 19th-century linguistics were devoted to figuring out the nuances of the parent language. It was deduced that this parent language started approximately 6000 years ago and has developed in English, Russian, and Hindi[16].

Leading up to modern linguistic study and the rule-governed system of the human language, the focus would be on syntax and semantics of language in the 20th century. Historical linguistics had led to the emergence of the semantics and some forms of pragmatics (Nerlich, 1992; Nerlich and Clarke, 1996). It continues today and linguistics have succeeded in grouping approximately 5000 languages of the world into a number of common ancestors.

CONCLUSION: Saussure had initiated structural linguistics. It set the direction of European linguistic analysis from the 1920s onwards. By the 20th century, structure turned more into grammar and was furthered through sophisticated methods of grammatical analysis.

During the second World War, North American linguists Leonard Bloomfield, William Mandeville Austin[17] and their colleagues developed teaching materials for a variety of languages whose knowledge was needed for the war effort. This work led to an increasing prominence of the field of linguistics, which became a recognized discipline in most American universities after the war.

From roughly 1980 onwards, pragmatic, functional, and cognitive approaches have steadily gained ground. Today, linguistics encompasses a large number of scientific approaches and has developed still more fields. It includes applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and computational linguistics.

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