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# BASIC HUMANITIES

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **AN INTRODUCTION TO GENERAL LINGUISTICS**

**BY  
ENO E. URUA AND IMELDA I. UDOH**

#### **1. LINGUISTICS**

##### **A: INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION**

To a layman, the term 'Linguistics' conjures a number of images. He may have the impression that Linguistics is concerned with the study of only foreign or exotic languages. He may believe that the linguist is an unusual individual with the ability to speak and possibly write many languages. Linguistics, for the linguists, deals with some of the above conceptions and more. Linguistics deals with language and its structure. In other words Linguistics seeks to investigate the general properties of language structure and how they are exemplified in a particular language (Southworth & Daswani 1974:3). More commonly, however, linguists prefer to look at Linguistics as the scientific study of language. Just how scientific Linguistics is, is our concern in the next section.

##### **LINGUISTICS AS A SCIENTIFIC STUDY:**

Scientific studies as we find in Physics, Botany, Chemistry, etc. are

based on empiricism. This means that their subject matter is observed and experiments carried out can be verified; hypotheses and laws are also formulated. In as much as the subject matter of Linguistics is language, linguists believe that language data, like physical laboratory specimens, may be observed and rules concerning the structure and behaviour of language may also be formulated. Other researchers can also work on the same language data. In Linguistics, the linguist collects language data, groups them into similar classes and makes some general statements about his observations which may be further tested to verify the earlier general statements made. If for example the linguist is investigating the Ibibio language, he may make a general statement on the fact that most Ibibio nouns begin with vowel sounds as in the following examples:

1.	a	ebot	'goat'
	b	ubok	'hand'
	c	ewa	'dog'
	d	ufok	'house'
	e	abañ	'water pot'

Such a statement will, of course, be based on his earlier observations on the Ibibio language. Another independent linguist can also arrive at the same conclusion after a careful observation of the Ibibio language data.

The reason linguists believe their subject is scientific is obvious from the foregoing - since Linguistics deals with observable data, i.e. language as it is actually used and not what it should be.

The study of language as it is actually used by the native speakers is known as DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS while the study of language as it should be is known as PRESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS. Linguistics aims at investigating language with an objective and impartial approach.

#### B. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF LINGUISTICS:

From the preceding sections it is easy to see that the subject matter of Linguistics is language. Linguistics takes a close look at language for

two broad purposes. First, Linguistics studies individual languages for the purpose of providing complete and accurate descriptions for them for their own sake. Secondly, Linguistics also investigates language to reach certain generalizations and conclusions on language. Such generalizations and conclusions help linguists propound theories on language universals, language acquisition and linguistic theories (Crystal, 1974).

What then is language? Language is used by all human beings in all human activities. Language can be viewed both functionally in terms of the various uses language can be put to and formally with respect to how language is structured or organized. Given these two functions of language, linguists have attempted to define language to embrace both aspects. A few of such definitions of language are now provided below. Crystal (1974), defines language as "human vocal noise (or the graphic representation of this noise in writing) used systematically and conventionally by a community for purposes of communication ...". Language has also been defined as a system of communication ... almost wholly based on pure or arbitrary convention; (Robins, 1980); and finally, Bloch and Trager (1942) define language as "a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates and interacts."

From the above, it appears that there is no generally agreed definition of the term 'language'. If we regard language merely as a system of communication, then both verbal and non-verbal signs would fall into what is regarded as language. For example, 'eyei' and 'ndom' which are objects in the Ibibio culture are words in the Ibibio language since these objects are used to communicate important messages in Ibibio. The same can also be said for the more familiar traffic lights where red means **stop**; **amber** or **yellow** means **be on the look out to either stop or go** while **green** indicates that one **should move**. The talking drum is another object which is used in communication in most African communities. It may be used to impart important messages or direct dance steps. Among the Zulus, beads are used in communication between suitors and their intended brides (Pei, 1965), and in other parts of the world flowers are also

used as a means of some kind of communication. Gestures are also used as a means of communication and in fact some North American Indian tribes "are known to have developed a system of sign language whereby members of different groups, speaking dissimilar languages could carry on lengthy conversations about any topic..." Pei. 1965). Such a science is referred to as Pasimology. Even silence in certain contexts e.g. love situation can communicate something (cf Essien n.d. "Language in Africa").

Quite apart from the consideration of language as a means of communication in the above definitions, language is also said to be sound. But if language is merely sound, then we might as well say that since the barking of dogs, roaring of lions, and the clap of thunder are sounds, they can qualify as language. However, these do not help us in human communication and they are referred to as non-linguistic systems of communication or noise. Linguists do not investigate this area. This is left to the field of study known as Semiotics. Linguists concentrate on the strictly linguistic system of communication which involves human speech sounds for communication. In order therefore to resolve the problem of an adequate definition of language, linguists provide a list of characteristics for human language.

### C. CHARACTERISTICS OF LANGUAGE:

As pointed out earlier, linguists investigate language for two primary reasons: to provide a complete description of specific languages and from these descriptions arrive at general conclusions on the nature of language. From their pursuits, therefore, linguists have observed that there are certain qualities which are common to all human languages. These observations are verifiable.

Some of the important characteristics of language include the following:

Language is primarily sound.

Language is meaningful.

Language is linear.

Language is systematic or organized.

Language is arbitrary.

Language is conventional.

Language is a system of contrasts.

Language is creative or productive.

Language has the characteristic of displacement.

Language is non-instinctive.

Language is unique.

We will now elaborate on each of these characteristics.

That language is primarily sound implies that all human languages make use of human speech sounds. Human speech sounds are produced when air from the lungs is modified in the throat, mouth or nose. Such a modification may lead to two types of speech sounds: vowels and consonants. The glottis may also act as a source of human speech sounds. The vowels are produced when there is no friction whatsoever of the air from the lungs whereas consonants are produced with either some friction or complete blockage of the air from the lungs. These speech sounds so produced are received by another human being through the ear and interpreted by the human brain as meaningful units. Language or combination of sounds is meaningful only to those who share the same set of symbols and meaning. The production of speech sounds will be revisited under Phonetics. Human language is therefore primarily speech which is later converted to writing in some languages.

Language is meaningful. Language can only be meaningful to the speakers who share a particular linguistic system. As noted already, language is necessary for communication. For communication to take place effectively, what is said by the speaker has to be meaningful or understood by the hearer. Before this can happen, it is assumed that the speaker and the hearer or listener must share a linguistic system or language. Language would cease to be meaningful if one were to speak Ibibio language to another who does not share the Ibibio linguistic system.

That Language is linear is to be understood as meaning that language is described as a string or sequence of sounds with one sound following the other to form words, phrases, and sentences.

When language is said to be systematic it means that language is organized. There is a definite number of sound units which are used in different combinations to produce different morphemes. These morphemes and words are in turn organised into phrases and sentences using the same sound units. For instance, from the following English sounds /θ/, /æ/, /k/, /t/ we can derive the words /θæt/ and /kæt/ which in turn can be combined to form the phrase /θæt kæt/ (that cat). This organization and interrelationship in language is also called **DUAL ORGANISATION**.

That Language is arbitrary does not mean that language is not organized. Rather we mean that there is no system in the way signals and phenomena correspond. The same phenomenon in nature may be signalled by different nomenclature depending on the language. For instance, the animal **dog**, is so called in English, **ewa** in Ibibio language, **eja** in Yoruba, **nkita** in Igbo and **chien** in French. All the different names refer to the same object. There is no obvious reason why this variation occurs, or why a particular language has the particular name for this animal. Language is arbitrary because there is no direct connection between the object and its name. There are a few exceptions when we are dealing with onomatopoeic words. These are words which are described by the characteristic sounds associated with them. For instance, the English word **cockoo** refers to a bird which makes a sound similar to 'cuckoo'.

That language is conventional indicates that there is an unstated, constant relationship between a signal and an observable phenomenon. These conventions are shared by members of a particular linguistic system. For instance, there is an agreement between all English language speakers on the object to be referred to as **dog**. If such a shared conventionality were absent, then there would be a lot of confusion since each individual would provide a different signal for an identical phenomenon. Conventionality in language constitutes and also stabilizes systems.

Language is a system of contrasts, meaning that language is sustained by a system of contrasts from one level to another. These contrasts are evident at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels. At the



phonological level /t/ can contrast with /d/ as in /tip/ and /dip/ or /æ/ with /a/ as in /mæd/ and mād/ in the English language. At the morphological or word level, **cow** can contrast with **goat**; **book** with **pencil**; **air** with **pain**, etc. Finally, at the sentence or syntactic level, one can also establish a contrast as in the following sentences:

2. a The carpet is clean.
- b The carpet is dirty.
- c The book was given to him as a present.
- d The book was bought by him for a present.

Language is creative or productive in the sense that human beings are capable of creating and understanding new utterances not spoken or heard before provided that the speaker and the hearer share the same language. This is why creative writers create a new world through their innovative and creative use of language.

Closely related to the characteristic of creativity in language is the fact that language has a displacement characteristic. This means that one can use human language to discuss things, events, ideas, and feelings one has not experienced before. One can also use language to talk about an object or phenomenon which is not present at the time of discussion. Man can therefore tell lies because of this characteristic of language (Southworth and Daswani 1974:11). Language itself also benefits from this characteristic in that it can enrich itself by borrowing from other languages to talk about concepts not indigenous to that particular linguistic system.

Language is non-instinctive since it is an acquired or learned skill. All human beings acquire language by actively learning language from their language communities. When a human child is not exposed to any form of human language, that child will not speak any form of intelligible human language. Language acquisition is not like a baby's cry which occurs instinctively at birth without having to be learnt from parents. Human language then has to be acquired.

Each language is unique because each language has its individual systematic network of contrasts. Even where two languages share the same segments, these segments are definitely organised and combined in different ways. For instance, both English and Ibibio linguistic systems have /p/. However, the English /p/ may occur at the beginning of an English word as in 'pound', 'pail', 'pill' but the Ibibio /p/ never occurs at the beginning of a word; it may occur in the middle or end of a word as in the following examples:

3	a	dippe	'lift up'
	b	koppo	'unlock'
	c	etap	'saliva'
	d	ndap	'dream (noun)'

Further, all languages are similar. This in no way contradicts the idea that each language is unique. All languages are similar because they share certain common features. All languages have vowels and consonants which are the basic speech segments, albeit in differing numbers and degrees; languages also share some grammatical categories like nouns, verbs and meanings attached to these categories. This characteristic gives impetus to the need for the investigations in Linguistics which aim partly at providing linguistic universals based on common similarities observed in human languages.

Other characteristics of language are as follows:

Language is rooted in a human community.

Language is not inherited from parents as one inherits certain physical traits but is learned or acquired.

Every language is complete and suited to the community in which it is rooted.

Every language has a grammar which may or may not be written.

Every language changes (Essien n.d.)

## 2. DIVISIONS OF LINGUISTICS

### A. DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS

Linguistics comprises two broad areas of study: DESCRIPTIVE (Synchronic) Linguistics and HISTORICAL (Diachronic) Linguistics.

Descriptive Linguistics deals with the description of specific languages at a particular point, specifically at the present ....time, while historical Linguistics as the name suggests, is concerned with changes in language across time.

Linguistics itself in the modern sense is descriptive because the task of the linguist is to describe the way native speakers of languages actually speak these languages. In order that the work of linguists may be made easier, both the descriptive (synchronic) and the historical (diachronic) branches of Linguistics are divided further into smaller manageable units. Such divisions simply serve to ease the work of the linguist. It does not in any way suggest that language can be neatly compartmentalized into box-like units with no relationship between one unit and the other. Infact such units serve for a convenient means of analyses.

### **LEVELS OF LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION**

Since language is an enormous entity, linguists have found it convenient to split its analyses into manageable levels. These levels are:

- (a) Phonetics      (b) Phonology      (c) Morphology
- (d) Syntax      (e) Semantics

### **PHONETICS**

Phonetics is the level of linguistic description which deals with the human speech sounds and their characteristics. A speech sound is any phonetically distinct unit of sound produced by the human speech organs. The speech organs are found mainly in the mouth and they include the two lips, the teeth, the tongue, the palate, velum, uvula and the pharynx; the lungs provide the air which is modified in the oral or nasal cavity for speech production. The branch of linguistics known as Phonetics may be further divided into three areas.

These are:

- (a) articulatory phonetics which deals with how the sounds we use in speech production are produced.
- (b) acoustic phonetics which deals with the physical properties of sound waves as well as the transmission of such waves from a speaker's mouth to the hearer's ear.

- (c) auditory phonetics which is concerned with the results of these effects on the ear, the nerves and the perception in the brain.

Phonetics also provides an accurate way of writing the actual human speech sounds accurately. This type of writing or representation is known as phonetic transcription. There are two kinds of phonetic transcription: the broad and narrow phonetic transcriptions. Phonetic transcription is different from the ordinary orthographic writing because in some languages the spelling system does not exactly correspond with the actual speech sounds used. For instance, the following English words have the orthographic spellings: **caught**, **teacher**, **man**, **pneumonia** but the following phonetic transcriptions: /kɔ:t/ /ti:tʃ/ /mæn/, /nju:məʊniə/.

Phonetic transcriptions are always enclosed in slanting brackets.

### PHONOLOGY:

Phonology is the branch of linguistic study that deals with the organization of speech sounds into meaningful units in particular languages. It investigates the speech sounds of a particular language and how such speech sounds are organized. The phonology of a language is also known as the sound system of a language. If we consider the sounds /p/ and /b/ in English phonologically, one can say that they are significant, contrastive or phonemic because of their use in the English phonological system as in the following examples: pin/bin. /p/ and /b/ are phonemes in English. Phonemes are the significant or contrastive or meaning - distinguishing speech sounds of a language. The difference in the meanings of the two items is as a result of the two initial sounds. The phonology of another language which may have the same sounds /p/ and /b/ may not have the statement that /p/ and /b/ are significant or contrastive sounds in the same position. In the Ibibio language for instance, both /b/ and /p/ occur but one cannot find a contrast between /p/ and /b/ in initial position. However, these two phonemes do occur in Ibibio and actually contrast medially (Essien, 1990:II).

We can then see that phonology deals with the sounds of a language and how those sounds are organised into

a system in that particular language. As a further illustration, both Ibibio and English have the sounds s, p, r, but only English can constitute all three sounds into a consonant cluster to begin a word as in **spray**, **spread**, **sprinkle**; Ibibio cannot organise these sounds into such a cluster. Phonological statements of a particular language are enclosed in slanting lines thus /pIn/, /In/ (English); /ben/ 'take' /kop/ 'hear' (Ibibio).

Apart from the vowels and consonants, other aspects of speech are present in the phonology of different languages. Stress is a feature that is used significantly in English and some other languages. Where stress placement occurs on certain words may determine the class of such words as in the following examples:

4.	a	'export	Noun
	b	ex'port	Verb
	c	'import	Noun
	d	im'port	Verb

The accent marks on the words signify stress. Stress is important in a language like English and is therefore part of the phonology of English.

Other languages like Ibibio make use of tone significantly in that the nature of tone may be the only factor in changing the meaning of one word from another as in the following examples from Ibibio.

5.	a	dép	'buy'
	b	dèp	'fall (as in rain)'
	c	'kòp	'dish out food'
	d	kòp	'lock'

Examples 5(a) and (c) have high tones while (b) and (d) have low tones. One can then have English phonology, Ibibio phonology, Igbo phonology, Hausa phonology, German phonology, etc.

### **MORPHOLOGY:**

Morphology is concerned with the study of word formation and the internal structure of words and morphemes. Phonology organizes significant speech sounds into morphemes and words which are then investigated under Morphology. The basic unit in Morphology is the **morpheme** just as the phoneme is the basic unit in Phonology. The morpheme is commonly defined as the smallest meaningful part of a word. In a word like **boys**,

there are two morphemes: **boy** and the plural morpheme-s. Each of the two morphemes is the smallest meaningful part of the word **boys**; an item like **unfaithful** has three constituent morphemes as follows: **un-** the negative morpheme, **faith-** a free morpheme and **full-**a derivational bound morpheme.

The structure of a word can be said to consist of the **root** and its **affixes**. The root of a word is the basic and uninflected form of a word. Again, if we take the item **boys**, the root will be **boy** which is the basic and uninflected form. There are three types of affixes: prefixes, infixes and suffixes. The prefix is an affix which is added before the root of a word. In **impossible**, the prefix is **im-**. The infix is an affix that can be found within the root. In the Igbo word **anumanu-** 'animal kingdom', **-ma-** is the interfix since it occurs within **anu-anu**. The suffix is an affix attached after the root. For instance, in the word **faithful**, **-ful** is the suffix since it occurs after the root **faith**. In the study of morphology, reference is also made to the term **stem**. According to Tomori (1977:32) "the 'stem' of a word is that part of the word to which the last morpheme in the word is structurally added." see also (Geason 1978) on **stem**.

The branch of linguistics known as Morphology may also be divided into Inflectional and Derivational morphology. Inflectional morphology deals with inflections which are mainly grammatical; for instance, plural markers, negative markers, tense and aspectual markers which do not change the word classes. If we consider the items **boys** and **unnatural**. The plural morpheme **-s** in **boys** and the negative morpheme **un-** in **unnatural** do not change the word class of the items from noun and adjective respectively. However, there is a grammatical meaning added in terms of number and meaning. Derivational morphemes are those morphemes which when affixed to words, change their word classes. For instance, **legal** is an adjective but when the morpheme **-ize** is affixed to it, it becomes **legalize**, changing its word class from an adjective to a verb. **Legalize** itself a verb can be changed to a noun by the affixation of **-ation-legalization**.

### **SYNTAX:**

Syntax deals with how well-formed words are combined into well-

formed phrases and sentences. Just as there are rules in organizing sounds of a language, there are also rules in organizing words into well-formed sentences, otherwise we would not have sentences. Consider the following structures:

6. a The boys are listening.  
 b The boy is listening.  
 \*c The boys is listening.  
 \*d The boy are listening.

The first two utterances are well-formed sentences because the requirement that in English sentences there must be an agreement between the subject of the sentence and the verb in number and person has been fulfilled. But the last two utterances violate this requirement and are therefore not well-formed sentences. Sentences that are not well-formed are preceded by asterisks as we have in 6(c) and (d). Moreover, there are rules on what grammatical categories stay at which position in a sentence. This again depends on the rules of a particular language. In English for instance quantifiers occasionally precede nouns as in the following examples:

7. a two men  
 b twelve thousand voters  
 but not  
 8. a \*men two  
 b \*voters twelve thousand

In Ibibio syntax however, the reverse is the case; quantifiers follow the nouns as in

9. a ideen iba 'two men'  
 (men two)  
 b ufok ata 'sixty houses'  
 (house sixty)

but not

10. a \*iba ideen  
 (two men)  
 b \*ata ufok  
 (sixty house)

The concern of syntax then is to consider how the words of a particular language may be organized into well-formed phrases and sentences which are meaningful.

### **SEMANTICS:**

Semantics is the level of Linguistics that deals with the meaning of Linguistic forms in morphemes, phrases and sentences. It also deals with the relationship among these forms. For instance, the word **beautiful** can be defined by relating it to its opposite which is ugly. Alternatively, it can be defined with other equivalent forms which have similar meanings such as lovely, fine, etc. Semantics also deals with implicational statements, ambiguities presuppositions, word meaning, sentential meanings, idiomatic and figurative expressions, etc.

If we consider the word **boys**. It has two morphemes: **boy** and the morpheme **-s**. The form **boy** would be interpreted to mean a young human (male) while the **-s** form means that we are dealing with more than one young human male. Consider the sentence:

The letter is in the red envelope.

From this sentence we understand that the letter is in a red envelope not a blue or a green one. Let us consider the sentence:

Yesterday was his red letter day.

This sentence is an idiomatic expression because we cannot interpret it based on the total meaning of the individual lexical items. For instance, the sentence does not mean that he received a red letter yesterday. It means that yesterday was a very important day in his life. One of the concerns of Semantics is that it distinguishes between normal sentences that can be interpreted based on the individual words in the sentence and those that cannot be so interpreted.

Semantics is therefore a very important aspect of language study since in the absence of meaning, language would be useless to human beings.

### **DIVISIONS OF LINGUISTICS II**

Descriptive Linguistics was discussed at length in Section 2. That is one branch of Linguistics which is concerned with the three levels of



language description, "Core Linguistics", as some linguists prefer to call the areas so discussed.

This section will discuss other branches of Linguistics. These other branches, it will be noticed, although not "core" linguistic areas, are very much related to language. Note that each of them has a mother subject and as such deals with different aspects of language as will be shown shortly.

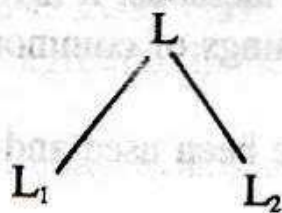
### **HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS:**

Language is a living phenomenon. This living quality in language is largely responsible for its constant changes. Since there is no such thing as 'uniformity in language', languages are therefore marked by peculiarities. These peculiarities are a result of the fact that language is "in a constant state of change" (Baugh and Cable, 1978:16). The speech of an individual differs at different times. The speech of different individuals in a community also differs, thus giving rise to differences in whole speech communities. These changes are constant but so gradual that one may not notice them at all. They become noticeable only after some time. Language being the sum total of individual speech habits of a community seems to play down on individual differences which most of the time are related to "performance".

However, where there is constant contact, between two communities, there is a kind of uniformity in the language spoken by both communities. But where communities lose touch and separation between them lasts for a long period, there arise differences in their speech. An implication of this statement is that the language which perhaps moved to another area would now be in contact with another language and that association would develop another hybrid, different from the one it left behind. Such differences could give rise to varieties called **dialects**. With time and association, dialects could give rise to **Languages**

Languages thus have genetic relationships.

Two languages are said to be related if they are divergent continuations of the same earlier language as shown below:



A language that occupies the L position is called the Proto-language. It can also be called a "Parent Language" and its divergent continuations ( $L_1$  and  $L_2$ ) are usually referred to as "Daughter Languages", (Southworth and Daswani, 1974).

More divergences are possible and these could constitute a kind of "family". A "daughter" language with time can become a "parent" as more "daughters" emerge. This way, a kind of "family tree" is formed representing genetic relationships of languages.

Historical Linguistics is concerned with such considerations as discussed above. It is the study of language history. It also involves the study of the changes that occur in a language through a long period. Sometimes where written records are absent, it also involves a kind of reconstruction of earlier stages of the language and the changes that could have occurred in the course of its historical development.

## 1.2 COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS:

Comparative Linguistics is concerned mainly with the comparison and reconstruction of languages to arrive at the Proto- or Parent-language using what is popularly known as the "Comparative Method". This method was developed in the 19th Century and it is concerned with the sounds of a parent language and how such sounds are reflected in daughter-languages. The comparison of these sounds is done at the three linguistic levels of sound (phonology), structure (morphology), syntax and meaning (semantics).

This comparison is usually done with a view to reconstructing the parent language or showing relationships between existing languages if any. A certain degree of estimation is involved here as the time a language was spoken has to be estimated. Of course, there has to be substantial evidence recorded. But where there are no records at all, other methods are employed. "Dating" is one of such methods; it involves the computation of estimated time-depth relations of things of common origin.

Some of these methods have been used and all the languages of the

world grouped accordingly into eleven major groups as shown below.

1. Afro-Asiatic (spoken in Africa and Middle East)
2. Algonquian (East Coast and Great lake's Region of North America)
3. Athapaskan (West Coast of North America, Apache and Navaho in South West of the US).
4. Caucasian (Caucasis Region).
5. Dravidian (South India).
6. Fine-Ugric (Western Europe).
7. Indo-Hittite (North America to South Asia).
8. Khoisan (Hottentot - Bushman - South Africa).
9. Malayo-Polynesian (Madagascar to Hawaii).
10. Niger-Congo (West and South Africa).
11. Sino-Tibetan (China, Tibet, South East Asia)  
(Southworth and Daswani 1974:317).

### **SOCIOLINGUISTICS:**

Sociolinguistics is concerned with the functioning of language in society. According to Pride and Holmes (1972:7), it is a discipline which is concerned with "the study of the structure and use of language in its social and cultural contexts". It deals with communicative behaviour specifically in the context of general behaviour of men in the society. Constraints imposed on different aspects of a particular society are reflected in their linguistic behaviour. Different societies have constraints depending on their beliefs, cultures and traditions. For instance, there are different linguistic forms for such things as prayers, announcements, funerals, story telling, oaths, greetings, different types of oratory, etc. Again different societies have different taboos regarding linguistic behaviour. Certain topics cannot be addressed directly in some societies, but would be tackled through proverbs, wise sayings, etc.

The main constraints on verbal behaviour of speakers in a society include among others; age, social class, sex, ethnic background, education, profession, linguistic background (monolingual, bilingual, or multi lingual).

Due to such constraints on language behaviour, every community has

more than one language (dialect) in its inventory of communicative devices. If a community has many languages for different purposes, then all these languages co-exist in such a community, it is said that the said community is **multilingual**. If another community uses two languages to serve its different needs, then such a community is said to be **bilingual**. Again, if a community uses just one language, then such a community is monolingual. Note however, that it is difficult to have monolingual communities because of many sociolinguistic problems which are outside the scope of this chapter. A study into bilingualism and multilingualism helps to show very clearly, the relationship between socio-cultural values and linguistic variation.

There are usually two levels of sociolinguistic study. The first involves the use of data on very large scales. These data are surveyed to find out how whole communities use language. This is called "macro-scale study", (Pride and Holmes, 1972:7). On the other hand, there is the "micro-scale study", which as the name suggests, involves examination of individuals' use of their understanding of the societal norms and values to get what they want. Considerations such as these, among others, are the concern of Sociolinguistics.

### **PSYCHOLINGUISTICS:**

Psycholinguistics is concerned largely with language acquisition and linguistic behaviour.

Language as a mental phenomenon has many functions - mediation of our relations with others, storage and transmission of human knowledge and culture, among others.

Questions relating to linguistic behaviour are not easy to deal with. As a result, this area of Linguistics is full of conflicting opinions. One of such is the relationship between language and thought. It is accepted generally that language plays an important role in the mental activity, but what is not yet resolved is whether thought can occur at all without language.

It is believed though, that thoughts are conditioned by linguistic categories. Words (or linguistic structures) help in forming or retaining concepts. At the same time, no two languages can be precisely broken up to suit concepts. For instance, while some languages can distinguish between certain colours, others cannot. This goes a long way to show that lexical differences have some effects on thought. This is evident in the fact that it is easier to think about things we have words for.

Language, we all know, is a vital ingredient for mental growth. While we are here concerned with the child's acquisition of adult language, it is important to note that children communicate with their nurses long before their first utterance of meaningful words. The child first understands what is said before attempting to produce words. The former is known as passive or receptive language while the later is called active or productive language. The transition from passive to active speech takes different forms in different children.

### **APPLIED LINGUISTICS:**

Applied Linguistics, as the name suggests, deals with the application of linguistic knowledge and results to practical uses. Findings from both Theoretical and Descriptive Linguistics are used very effectively today in other fields like Sociology, Philosophy, Language teaching, Anthropology and many other disciplines.

Discussions of Applied Linguistics tend to centre on practical applications of Linguistics to solving problems. More details are given below.

### **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF LINGUISTICS**

The main emphasis has been in the area of language teaching, be it first or second language teaching. Linguistic application was first adopted in language teaching during world war II. This was as a result of the need to teach soldiers the different languages they needed for communication in very short periods. Since then, many methods have been used and these methods are being revised each year with more researches. Some of these methods include:

(a) The linguistic Method which involves a lot of Mim-Mem (Mimicry-Memorization). This method involves the mimicry of some dialogue which is later memorized.

(b) Contrastive and Error Analyses -

These two methods involve the comparison of two grammars. It is believed that the areas of differences between two languages would pose problems. Such areas are emphasized with deliberate attempts at mastering the differences.

Another area which has attracted linguistic knowledge and results is the area of translation. Translation being a very complex issue requires special knowledge of language or languages that are involved in a particular case. It involves transfer of material from  $L_1$  to an  $L_2$  at all levels: phonological, syntactic and semantic.

The third area which also needs linguistic knowledge and results is the area of language planning. Although this area has since acquired serious political undertones, it is still very much in need of linguistic expert advice. Applied Linguistics with regard to this area, marries an understanding of linguistic structure and language use with policy-making. At the same time, it makes use of information regarding language use and policy in understanding linguistic structure and evolution. The choice of what language should be used for what purpose in a society is often not an easy task because a lot of factors like historical background of social groups, political allegiances, socio-economic pressures, etc. have to be considered. In most African countries and other parts of the world, the battle for a National language is quite fierce. Many countries are still battling with the problem of a choice. Some countries in order to avoid "civil wars" have had to adopt two or more indigenous languages, giving them the status of national languages. The criteria for choice are often varied. In Nigeria for instance, it is a matter of the population of the citizens that speak the language(s). The three "WAZOBIA" languages are spoken by the three considerably large ethnic groups: Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. Ghana selected nine out of the 45 languages of the country for national status, Southward and Daswani (1974).

## **RELATIONSHIP AND RELEVANCE OF LINGUISTICS TO OTHER DISCIPLINES**

Language is a very important tool in all human endeavours. Every thing man does is mirrored in language. It is so important to man that it even assumes such an important human quality as life. Language like man is a living phenomenon. It is "born"; it has "daughters" and "sons"; it grows and may eventually die. a discipline that handles such a phenomenon therefore, must be extremely important because it has to relate to all other disciplines. All others use language for transmission and recording of their findings.

We need not go into much detail in an introductory course such as this. But note that each of the disciplines which has been discussed in this chapter relates to Linguistics in quite an interesting manner: History giving rise to Historical Linguistics, Psychology giving rise to Psycholinguistics, Sociology giving rise to Sociolinguistics, among others.

## **USES OF LINGUISTICS**

People outside the domain of Linguistics are constantly probing the necessity for the field of study known as Linguistics. Quite apart from the fact that Linguistics has intrinsic value to the devotees, it also has a number of practical uses which are of immense benefit to people outside the field of Linguistics. This is hardly surprising since Linguistics deals with the study of language and language is a tool that is universally used. The term commonly used to refer to the field of practical applications of linguistic findings to other areas is known as Applied Linguistics. (which has been discussed above).

The commonest area of Applied Linguistics is in language teaching and learning. Here the descriptive work of linguists and the techniques they develop provide better insight to the teaching of languages.

Closely related to the above is the input of Contrastive Linguistics whose studies on the similarities and differences between two different languages highlight areas where the learners of these languages are likely

to have problems.

An understanding of Linguistics assists in no small measure in the translation of materials from one language to another. Linguistic insights have shown that translation is better done at all the levels of language description rather than at word-for-word level.

Phonetics, one of the branches of 'core' Linguistics has very many uses. This discipline helps people to speak languages well. In conjunction with phonology, it provides a basis for the construction of orthography for languages hitherto unwritten and corrects defective orthography. Generally, Phonetics is now used to aid learners' power of imitation as well as improve the ears of learners.

Language Planning for nations is an area where Linguistics has played very vital roles. First, linguistic work assists in compiling the actual number of languages and dialects a particular nation may have. This will also provide information on the number of speakers and on which of these should be put up as national languages in a multilingual nation.

People are generally very sensitive when it comes to their languages or dialects especially in multilingual countries. Linguists can explain to people that all languages are equal and that each language is built to cope with the needs of that particular language community. This goes a long way in easing tension with respect to people's attitude of linguistic intolerance where a speaker of one language feels that his language is better than the other speaker's language.

Multilingual nations are faced with a number of language problems, chief among which is the selection and standardization of a national language. The linguist, armed with his knowledge of Linguistics, is in a good position to assist in the standardization process of national languages.

Many languages of the world, especially those with a limited number of speakers may face the threat of extinction. The work of linguists can go a long way in codifying and preserving such languages.



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