

How to Cite:

Zun, X. Z. (2020). History and field linguistics. *Macrolinguistics and Microlinguistics*, 1(2), 93–103.

History and Field Linguistics

Xin Zang Zun

Sun Yat-sen University, Shenzhen, China


Abstract---This study aims to understand the history and fields of science in linguistics. Until the Renaissance, the languages studied were Greek and Latin. Latin had an important role at that time because it was used as a tool in the world of education, administration, and international diplomacy in Western Europe. During the Renaissance, language research began to develop into Romance languages (French, Spanish, and Italian) which were considered to have Latin roots, as well as non-Roman languages such as English, German, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish.

Keywords---behavioral units, fiction, language research, language since, linguistic society, linguistics, semantics, structural grammar, structural linguistics, traditional grammar.

Introduction

Linguistics or linguistics studied today comes from research on language since the time of the Greeks in the 6th century BC. The study of linguistics has undergone 3 stages of development, namely (1) the stage of speculation, (2) the stage of observation and classification, and (3) the stage of theory formulation. At the stage of speculation, there are statements that language is not based on empirical data but fairy tales / mere fiction. For example, the statement of Andreas Kemke, a 17th-century Swedish physiologist, states that in ancient times the Prophet Adam spoke Danish in Heaven, while the Serpent spoke French. The French spoken by the Snake and the Danish language used by Prophet Adam are difficult to prove because there is no scientific evidence (Koerner & Asher, 2014; Miller, 2003; Brown, 2005). It cannot be proven because there is no empirical data.

At this stage of classification and observation, linguists make observations on the languages under investigation but are not yet at the stage of formulating a theory, therefore this stage cannot be concluded to be scientific. At the theory formulation

© 2020 by The Author(s). 

This journal is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Corresponding author: Zun, X.Z. | Email: xinzangzun@yahoo.com

Manuscript submitted: 18 Feb 2020 | Manuscript revised: 9 March 2020 | Accepted for publication: 2 June 2020

stage when the language under study is not only observed and classified but also theories have been made (Nerlich & Clarke, 2000; Kress, 1989; Kaplan & Grabe, 2002).

Method

Informal education, there are terms of traditional grammar and structural grammar. Traditional grammar analyzes language based on philosophy and semantics, while structural grammar is based on the formal characteristics that exist in a particular language. Traditional grammar says a verb is a word that expresses an action, while structural grammar says a verb is a word that can be distributed with the phrases "with", "how", and so on (do Couto, 2014; De Vries & De Vries, 2004). In Greek times philosophers researched what is meant by language and what is the nature of language. These philosophers agree that language is a sign system. It is revealed that humans live in signs that cover all aspects of human life, such as buildings, medicine, health, geography, and so on (Belhassen & Caton, 2009; Cortes, 2004; Ariani et al., 2014). But regarding the nature of language – whether language resembles reality or not – they do not agree. Two great philosophers whose thoughts continue to be influential today are Plato and Aristotle.

Result and Discussion

Plato argues that language is like reality; while Aristotle argues on the contrary that language does not resemble reality except onomatopoeia and sound symbolism. Plato's view that language is similar to reality or non-arbitrary is followed by naturalists; Aristotle's view that language is not similar to reality or arbitrary is followed by conventionalists. This difference of opinion also extends to the issue of regularity or irregularity in language. The group of adherents of the opinion that there is a regularity of language is analogists whose views are not different from those of naturalists; while the anomalies who argue that there are irregularities in language inherit the views of the conventionalists. The views of the anomaly influenced the Stoics. The Stoics were more interested in the philosophical origin of language. They also differ widely published in the journal *Language* which was founded by the Linguistic Society of America in 1924. In 1933 this scholar published a book *Language* which expressed his behaviorism view of the facts of language, namely stimulus-response or stimulus-response. This theory was from Harvard University in teaching language through the drilling technique (Figueroa, 2014; Harklau, 2002; Koerner, 1995).

In his book *Language*, Bloomfield has an opinion that contradicts Sapir. Sapir argues that phonemes are psychological units, but Bloomfield argues that phonemes are behavioral units. Bloomfield and his followers conduct research based on the structure of the language studied, because of that they are called structuralists and their views are called structuralists (Koerner, 1995; Brandist, 2008; Vongpumivitch et al., 2009).

Bloomfield and his followers have mastered the arena of linguistics for more than 20 years. During this time the Bloomfieldians attempted to write descriptive grammars of unliberated languages. The Bloomfieldians have been instrumental in laying the foundations for later linguistic research.

Bloomfield argues that phonology, morphology, and syntax are independent and unrelated fields. Another grammar that treats language as a system of relationships is the stratification grammar pioneered by S.M. Lamb. Another grammar that treats language as a system of elements is the tagmemic grammar pioneered by K. Pike. According to this approach each gate is filled with an element. This element together with other elements forms a unit called tagmemics (Martin, 2013; Achugar & Schleppegrell, 2005; Koerner, 1997). Another Sapir student, Zellig Harris, applied the structuralist method to the analysis of language segments. This scholar tries to relate morphological, syntactic, and discourse structures in the same way that phonological analysis does. The research procedure is described in his book *Methods in Structural Linguistics* (1951).

A linguist who is quite prolific in making books is Priva & Austerweil (2015). This scholar sparked the theory of transformation through his book *Syntactic Structures* (1957), which was later called a classical theory. In subsequent developments, the transformation theory of the Indians. An American linguist named William Dwight Whitney (1827-1894) wrote some books on language, including *Language and the Study of Language* (1867). Adherents of structural linguistics gave rise to many schools, including (1) the Prague School. The figure of the Prague school is Vilem Mathesius, the Prague school makes a clear distinction between phonetics and phonology. Phonetics → studying the sounds themselves, phonology → studying the function of these sounds in a system. (2) Glossematic Flow. The character is Louis Hjelmslev. Language analysis begins with discourse, then the utterance is analyzed on constituents that have a paradigmatic relationship in terms of form, expression, and content. (3) Firthian School. He is famous for his theory of prosodic phonology, which is a way to determine meaning at the phonetic level. There are 3 main types of prosody, namely (a) prosody involving combinations of phonemes → word structure, syllable structure, consonant combinations, and vowel combinations, (b) prosody formed by joints/pauses, and (c) prosody whose phonetic realization exceeds the unit used larger than the suprasegmental phonemes.

Another linguistic figure who is also an anthropologist is Franz Boas (1858-1942). This scholar was educated in Germany but spent time teaching in his own country. His work in the form of a book *Handbook of American Indian languages* (1911-1922) was written with some colleagues. The book contains a description of phonetics, categories of meaning, and grammatical processes used to express meaning. In 1917 published a scientific journal entitled *International Journal of American Linguistics*. The American-educated follower of Boas, Edward Sapir (1884-1939), also an

anthropologist, is considered to have produced outstanding works in the field of phonology. His book, *Language* (1921) is mostly about the typology of language. Sapir's noteworthy contribution is regarding the classification of Indian languages.

Sapir's thoughts influenced his followers, L. Bloomfield (1887-1949), who through his lectures and works dominated the world of linguistics until the end of his life. In 1914 Bloomfield wrote the book *An Introduction to Linguistic Science*. The article contains four types of word classes, namely nouns, verbs, conjunctions, and articles. At the beginning of the 3rd century BC, the study of language was developed in the city of Alexandria, which was a Greek colony. In the city was built a large library which became a center for language and literary research. Scholars from the city called the Alexandrians continued the work of the Stoics, although they were analogists. As analogists, they sought an order in language and succeeded in establishing Greek inflection patterns. What today is called "traditional grammar" or "Greek grammar", the naming is nothing but the work of these Alexandrians.

One of the language linguists named Dionysius Thrax (late 2nd century BC) was the first to succeed in systematically making grammatical rules and adding parts of speech adverbs, participles, pronouns, and prepositions to the four parts of speech that had been made by the Stoics. In addition, this scholar also succeeded in classifying Greek words according to the case, gender, number, tense, diathesis (voice), and mode. The influence of Greek grammar extends to the Roman Empire. Latin grammarians adopted Greek grammar in their study of Latin and made only minor modifications, as the two languages are similar. Latin grammar was created based on Dionysius Thrax's grammatical model. Two other linguists, Donatus (c. 400 AD) and Priscian (c. 500 AD) also produced classical grammar books from Latin that had an influence down to the middle Ages.

During the 13-15 centuries Latin played an important role in education as well as in Christianity. At that time, grammar was nothing but a theory of word classes. During the Renaissance, Latin became a means of understanding literature and writing. In 1513 Erasmus composed Latin grammar based on a grammar compiled by Donatus. Interest in researching languages in Europe started before the Renaissance, among others, with the writing of Irish grammar (7th century AD), Icelandic grammar (12th century), and so on. At that time language became a tool in literature, and when it became an object of research at universities it remained within the traditional framework. Grammar is considered the art of speaking and writing correctly. The main task of grammar is to give instructions on the use of the "good language", that is, the language of the educated. The instructions for using "good language" are to avoid the use of elements that can "damage" language such as loan words, variety of conversations, and so on.

The Greco-Latin grammatical tradition had an influence on other European languages. Dionysius Thrax's grammar in the 5th century was translated into Armenian, then into Syriac. Then Arabic grammarians absorbed Syriac grammar. In addition to Europe and West Asia, language research in South Asia that needs to be known is in India with its grammarian named Panini (4th century BC). This expertly compiled Sanskrit grammar has advantages in the field of phonetics. This advantage is partly due to the necessity to recite correctly and correctly the prayers and songs in the Vedic scriptures. Until the Renaissance, the languages studied were Greek and Latin. Latin had an important role at that time because it was used as a tool in the world of education, administration, and international diplomacy in Western Europe. During the Renaissance, language research began to develop into Romance languages (French, Spanish, and Italian) which were considered to have Latin roots, as well as non-Roman languages such as English, German, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish. Traditional linguistics is divided into:

Greek age linguistics

The main linguistic problems that became a conflict of linguists at the time of the Greeks were (1) the conflict between *physis* and *nomos*. The Greek philosophers questioned whether language was natural (*physis*) or convention (*nomos*), natural/physical, meaning that language has a relationship of origins, sources in eternal principles and cannot be replaced outside of humans themselves. [Eling & Whitaker \(2009\)](#) thoughts:

- Spoken language is more important than written language. Writing is only a means of representing speech ([Matsuda et al., 2003](#); [Gnutzmann & Rabe, 2014](#));
- Linguistics is descriptive, not prescriptive as in traditional grammar. Linguists are tasked with describing how people speak and write in their language, not making decisions about how one should speak;
- Research is synchronous, not diachronic as in 19th-century linguistics. Although language develops and changes, research is carried out over a certain period;
- Language is a two-sided sign system, consisting of a significant (signifier) and a signified (signifier). Both are inseparable forms, when one changes, the other also changes;
- Formal and non-formal language becomes the object of research;
- Language is a system of relations and has a structure;
- Differentiated between language as a system contained in the minds of language users of a social group (*langue*) with language as a manifestation of each speaker (*parole*).

- Distinguished between associative and syntagmatic relations in language. Associative or paradigmatic relationships are relationships between language units with other units because there are similarities in form or meaning. The syntagmatic relationship is the relationship between the units forming the syntagma by contrasting one unit with another unit that follows or precedes it.

This structuralism movement from Europe affected the American continent. The study of language in America in the 19th century was influenced by the work of European scholars under the name descriptivism. American linguists studied the Indian languages descriptively by describing the structure of the language. Americans pay much attention to language problems. Thomas Jefferson, the third American president (1801-1809), recommended that American linguists begin researching languages.

Structural linguistics

Structural linguistics is an approach in language investigation that considers language as a free system (Harimurti Kridalaksana, 2001: 130). The flow of structural linguistics developed in two places, namely in Europe and America. In Europe, this flow was developed by Ferdinand de Saussure who is the father of modern linguistics. The book, entitled *Course de Linguistique Generale*, discusses the concepts of (1) synchronic and diachronic studies, (2) language and parole differences, (3) significant and significant differences, and (4) syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships. While in America it was developed by Leonard Bloomfield. In the 20th century, language research was not aimed at European languages only, but also at languages in the world such as America (Indian languages), Africa (African languages), and Asia (Papuan languages and languages of many countries in Asia). Features:

- Research extends to languages in America, Africa, and Asia;
- The approach to research is structuralistic, at the end of the 20th century functionalist research is also quite prominent;
- Grammar is a part of science with increasingly complicated fields. Broadly speaking, it can be distinguished into microlinguistics, macro linguistics, and historical linguistics;
- Theoretical research is highly developed;
- Scientific autonomy is increasingly prominent, but interdisciplinary research is also developing;
- The principle in researching is description and synchronicity.

The success of the Junggrammaticians in reconstructing the proto-languages in Europe influenced the thinking of linguists in the 20th century, including Ferdinand de Saussure. This scholar is not only known as the father of modern linguistics but also a figure in the structuralism movement. In structuralism, language is considered a

system of relations. Its elements such as words, sounds are interrelated and dependent informing. Those who adhere to this understanding are naturalists. Conventionalists argue that language is a convention (nomos) meaning that the meanings of the words are obtained from the results of traditions/habits that can change. And (2) the contradiction between analogy and anomaly. Analogies, including Plato and Aristotle, argued that language is orderly so that it can compose grammar. For example Boy → Boys, Girl → Girls, Book → Books, and others. The anomaly group argues that language is irregular. For example, Child → Children, not Childs. From the explanation above, it appears that the anomaly is in line with the naturalists and the analogy is in line with the conventional.

Linguistics of the Roman age

Roman figures, Varro (116-27 BC) his *De Lingua Latina*, and Priscia with his *Institutiones Grammaticae*. *De Lingua Latina* is etymology, morphology, and syntax. *Institutiones Grammaticae* is the most complete book on Latin grammar, containing phonology, morphology, and syntax (Collinge, 1995). 1) Varro and *De Lingua Latina*. Debates on the issue of analogies and anomalies as in the Stoic period in Greece are still found in the book *De Lingua Latina*. This book is divided into the fields of etymology and morphology. (a) Etymology is a branch of linguistics that investigates the origin of words and their meanings. (b) Morphology is a branch of linguistics that studies words and their formation. Regarding declination, which is a change in word form, Varro distinguishes between 2 kinds of declination, namely naturalist declination, and voluntary declination. Naturalist declination is a change that is natural because the change is by itself and has been patterned. Voluntary declination, is a change that occurs morphologically, is selective and arbitrary. *Institutiones Grammaticae* or Priscian Grammar. Some aspects that should be discussed in this book include phonology, morphology, and syntax.

Medieval linguistics

Discussing language studies, among others (1) the Modistae, who discussed the contradiction between physis and nomos, and the contradiction between analogy and anomaly, (2) speculative grammar, which was the result of the integration of Latin grammatical descriptions (as formulated by Priscia), and (3) a linguistic figure named Petrus Hispanus, who had been Pope with the title Pope Johannes XXI, his book is entitled *Summulae Logical*.

Renaissance linguistics

This era is considered to be the opening of the century of modern thought. The things that stand out are (1) Hebrew and Arabic began to be studied by many people in the late Middle Ages, (2) Arabic linguistics began to develop rapidly because of the position of Arabic as the language of the holy book of Islam (Al-Quran), and (3) Arabic language. -European languages and languages outside Europe are getting attention ([Korta, 2008](#); [Collinge, 1995](#); [Lehmann & Malkiel, 2017](#)).

Linguistics of the 19th century

In the 19th century, Latin was no longer used in everyday life, nor in government or education. The object of the research is languages that are considered to have kinship relations from one parent language. Languages are grouped into language families based on phonological and morphological similarities. Thus it can be estimated whether certain languages come from the same ancestral language or come from the same proto-language so that genetically there is a kinship between them ([Aarts, 2004](#); [Newmeyer, 2014](#); [Gal, 2006](#)). Romance languages, for example, can be genetically traced to Latin, which derives from French, Spanish, and Italian.

Conclusion

To find out the genetic relationship between languages, a comparative method is used. Between 1820-1870 linguists succeeded in establishing systematic relationships between Romance languages based on their phonological and morphological structures. In 1870 the linguists from the Junggrammaticer or Neogrammarian group managed to find a way to find out the kinship relationship between languages based on the comparative method. Some of the language families that have been successfully reconstructed to date include:

- Indo-European languages: Germanic, Indo-Iranian, Armenian, Baltic, Slavic, Romance, Celtic, Gaulish languages;
- Semito-Hamite family: Arabic, Hebrew, Ethiopian;
- Chari-Nile clump; Bantu language, Khoisan;
- Dravidian languages: Telugu, Tamil, Kanari, Malayalam;
- Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian: Malay, Melanesian, Polynesian languages;
- Austro-Asiatic languages: Mon-Khmer, Palaung, Munda, Annam languages;
- Finno-Ugric: Ungar (Magyar) languages, Samoyid;
- Altai: Turkic, Mongol, Manchu, Japanese, Korean;
- Paleo-Asiatic: languages of Siberia;
- Sino-Tibetan: Chinese, Thai, Tibeto-Burmese languages;
- Caucasus family: languages of the North Caucasus, South Caucasus;

- Indian languages: Eskimo, Maya Sioux, Hokan;
- Other languages such as languages in Papua, Australia and Kadai.

The linguistic features of the 19th century are as follows:

- Language research was conducted on European languages, both Romance and non-Roman languages;
- The main area of research is comparative historical linguistics.

What is examined is the kinship of languages in Europe to find out which languages are from the same parent. In this comparative method, the change in the sound of words from the language that is considered as the parent to the language that is considered to be its offspring is investigated. For example, what changes in sound occur from the word goods, which in Latin reads causa to choose in French, and cosa in Italian and Spanish. The approach is atomistic. The language element under study is not related to other elements, for example, research on words is not related to phrases or sentences.

References

- Aarts, B. (2004). Conceptions of gradience in the history of linguistics. *Language Sciences*, 26(4), 343-389. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2003.07.001>
- Achugar, M., & Schleppegrell, M. J. (2005). Beyond connectors: The construction of cause in history textbooks. *Linguistics and Education*, 16(3), 298-318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2006.02.003>
- Ariani, M. G., Sajedi, F., & Sajedi, M. (2014). Forensic linguistics: A brief overview of the key elements. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 158, 222-225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.078>
- Belhassen, Y., & Caton, K. (2009). Advancing understandings: A linguistic approach to tourism epistemology. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(2), 335-352. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2009.01.006>
- Brandist, C. (2008). Sociological linguistics in Leningrad: The institute for the comparative history of the literatures and languages of the west and east (ILJaZV) 1921–1933. *Russian Literature*, 63(2-4), 171-200. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ruslit.2008.04.003>
- Brown, K. (2005). *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics* (Vol. 1). Elsevier.
- Collinge, N. E. (1995). History of comparative linguistics. In *Concise History of the Language Sciences* (pp. 195-202). Pergamon. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-042580-1.50037-4>
- Collinge, N. E. (1995). History of historical linguistics. In *Concise History of the Language Sciences* (pp. 203-212). Pergamon. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-042580-1.50038-6>

- Cortes, V. (2004). Lexical bundles in published and student disciplinary writing: Examples from history and biology. *English for specific purposes*, 23(4), 397-423. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2003.12.001>
- De Vries, A., & De Vries, A. (2004). *Elsevier's dictionary of symbols and imagery*. Brill.
- do Couto, H. H. (2014). Ecological approaches in linguistics: a historical overview. *Language Sciences*, 41, 122-128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2013.08.001>
- Eling, P., & Whitaker, H. (2009). History of aphasia: from brain to language. In *Handbook of clinical neurology* (Vol. 95, pp. 571-582). Elsevier. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0072-9752\(08\)02136-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0072-9752(08)02136-2)
- Figuerola, E. (2014). *Sociolinguistic metatheory*. Elsevier.
- Gal, S. (2006). Linguistic anthropology. *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics*, 7, 171-185.
- Gnutzmann, C., & Rabe, F. (2014). 'Theoretical subtleties' or 'text modules'? German researchers' language demands and attitudes across disciplinary cultures. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 13, 31-40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2013.10.003>
- Harklau, L. (2002). The role of writing in classroom second language acquisition. *Journal of second language writing*, 11(4), 329-350. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743\(02\)00091-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(02)00091-7)
- Kaplan, R. B., & Grabe, W. (2002). A modern history of written discourse analysis. *Journal of second language writing*, 11(3), 191-223. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743\(02\)00085-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(02)00085-1)
- Koerner, E. F. (1995). History of linguistics: the field. *Concise History of the Language Sciences*, 3-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-042580-1.50004-0>
- Koerner, E. F. K. (1995). Historiography of linguistics. In *Concise History of the Language Sciences* (pp. 7-16). Pergamon. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-042580-1.50005-2>
- Koerner, E. F. K., & Asher, R. E. (Eds.). (2014). *Concise history of the language sciences: from the Sumerians to the cognitivists*. Elsevier.
- Koerner, K. (1997). Linguistics vs Philology: Self-definition of a field or rhetorical stance?. *Language Sciences*, 19(2), 167-175. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0388-0001\(96\)00057-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0388-0001(96)00057-5)
- Korta, K. (2008). Malinowski and pragmatics: Claim making in the history of linguistics. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40(10), 1645-1660. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2007.12.006>
- Kress, G. (1989). History and language: Towards a social account of linguistic change. *Journal of pragmatics*, 13(3), 445-466. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(89\)90065-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(89)90065-9)
- Lehmann, W. P., & Malkiel, Y. (Eds.). (2017). *Directions for historical linguistics*. Brill.
- Martin, J. R. (2013). Embedded literacy: Knowledge as meaning. *Linguistics and Education*, 24(1), 23-37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2012.11.006>
- Matsuda, P. K., Canagarajah, A. S., Harklau, L., Hyland, K., & Warschauer, M. (2003). Changing currents in second language writing research: A colloquium. *Journal of*

- second language writing*, 12(2), 151-179. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743\(03\)00016-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(03)00016-X)
- Miller, G. A. (2003). The cognitive revolution: a historical perspective. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 7(3), 141-144. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613\(03\)00029-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613(03)00029-9)
- Nerlich, B., & Clarke, D. D. (2000). Semantic fields and frames: Historical explorations of the interface between language, action, and cognition. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32(2), 125-150. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(99\)00042-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00042-9)
- Newmeyer, F. J. (2014). *Linguistic theory in America*. Elsevier.
- Priva, U. C., & Austerweil, J. L. (2015). Analyzing the history of cognition using topic models. *Cognition*, 135, 4-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2014.11.006>
- Vongpumivitch, V., Huang, J. Y., & Chang, Y. C. (2009). Frequency analysis of the words in the Academic Word List (AWL) and non-AWL content words in applied linguistics research papers. *English for Specific Purposes*, 28(1), 33-41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2008.08.003>