

IMPORTANCE OF LINGUISTICS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

Linguistics is defined as the scientific study of language. From different viewpoints, as a science, linguistics can be divided into several branches, among others, descriptive linguistics and historical/comparative linguistics (if it is based its methodology), synchronic and diachronic linguistics (if is based on its aspect of time), and phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics (if it is based on a language as a system), and sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics (if it is related to or combined with the disciplines (sociology and psychology respectively). Linguists investigate how people acquire knowledge about language, how this knowledge interacts with other thought processes, how it varies between speakers and geographic regions, and how to model this knowledge computationally. They study how to represent the structure of various aspects of language (such as sounds or meaning), how to theoretically explain different linguistic patterns, and how different components of language interact with each other. Many linguists employ statistical analysis, mathematics, and logical formalism to account for the patterns they observe.

Key Words: branch, language, linguistics, morphology, science, structure, subject, syntax

Introduction

As a science, linguistics must fulfil some scientific prerequisites. First, it must have a subject matter. Language is said to be a subject matter of Linguistics. As a subject matter, a language must be clearly and explicitly defined. Before analyzing a language, some linguists define a language in different ways. Take for example, Finocchioro who defines a language as *a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols that permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact*. Thus, the scope of analysis is based on the clearly and explicitly defined subject matter. This is to say that everything beyond the scope such as gestures/bodily movement will be ignored. So *explicitness* in defining the subject matter must be conducted in order that we know what must be studied/analyzed and what must be left. Second, it must be based on an objective observation and/or investigation. This is to say that the observation and/or investigation on the subject matter must be conducted objectively. The result of observation and/or investigation must be described objectively too and it can be verified by any competent observer or investigator. So *objectivity* in conducting observation and/or investigation on the subject matter must be fulfilled in any scientific undertaking. Third, the result of observation and/or investigation must be systematically arranged. This must be conducted as an effort to show relationship within the subject matter. This is also meant to make the readers easy to read and study. Thus *systematicness* is also needed by linguistics. Language analysis for the sake to develop linguistics is done systematically within the framework of some general theory of language structure. The linguist tries to verify the theory by making objective

observations of actual language data and modifies the theory in the light of what he perceives to be patterns or regularities underlying the data.

Branches of Linguistics

Some branches of linguistics are as follows:

1. Phonetics
2. Phonology
3. Morphology
4. Syntax
5. Generative Transformational Grammar
6. Semantics
7. Pragmatics

Branches of linguistics in relation to the other fields of study:

8. Sociolinguistics
9. Psycholinguistics

The concepts of the branches of linguistics are presented as follows:

Phonetics is the study of speech sounds, which are known more technically as **phones**. This study highlights, especially, how the speech sounds produced by using speech organs. It shows mechanisms of how to produce the speech sounds.

Phonology, on the other hand, is essentially the description of the systems and patterns of speech sounds in a language. It is, in effect, based on theory of what every speaker of a language unconsciously knows about the sound patterns of that language. This study regards the speech sounds as having functions to differentiate meanings.

Morphology is the study of analyzing the expression system of a language which is concerned with the identification of morphemes and the ways in which they are distributed or combined into longer utterances or morphological constructions.

Syntax is defined as the study on arrangements of words into phrases, clauses, and sentences or syntactical constructions. The smallest units of syntax are words. When two or more words are arranged in a certain way, the result refers to syntactical construction. In other words, it can be said that a syntactical construction is a construction in which its immediate constituents (IC-a) are words (or free morphemes).

A grammar includes phrase-structure rules, lexical-insertion rules, and transformational rules. The grammar can be thought of as a machine which generates all the possible sentences of the language. A grammar containing such rules is called a *generative grammar*. When the rules include transformational rules, we have a transformational-generative grammar

A major factor in sentence interpretation involves a body of knowledge that is often called **pragmatics**. This includes the speaker's and addressee's background attitudes and beliefs, their understanding of the context in which a sentence is uttered, and their knowledge of the way in which language is used to communicate information.

A term **sociolinguistics** is a derivational word. Two words that form it are sociology and linguistics. Sociology refers to a science of society; and linguistics refers to a science of language. A study of language from the perspective of society may be thought as linguistics

plus sociology. Some investigators have found it to introduce a distinction between sociolinguistics and sociology of language. Some others regard sociolinguistics is often referred as the sociology of language.

The study that is concerned with the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. In other words, it studies the relationship between language and society. It explains we people speak differently in different social contexts. It discusses the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning. All of the topics provides a lot of information about the language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community, and the way people signal aspects of their social identity through their language (Jenet Holmes, 2001). Sociolinguistics also refers to the study that is concerned with the interaction of language and setting (Carol M. Eastman, 1975; 113). The other expert defines it as the study that is concerned with investigating the relationship between language and society with the goal of a better understanding of the structure of language and of how languages function in communication (Ronald Wardhaugh, 1986 : 12).

A term '**psycholinguistics**' is a combination of psychology and linguistics. Both are the branches of sciences. Psychology is defined as the systematic study of human experience and behavior or as the science that studies the behavior of men and other animals Knight and Hilgert in Abu Ahmadi, 1992). There are several branches of psychology, among others, social psychology, psychology of communication, developmental psychology, educational psychology, and psychology of language. The last branches of psychology are often called as psycholinguistics. It is defined as a field of study that combines psychology and linguistics. It covers language development. (Lim Kiat Boey). The other definition of psycholinguistics is that it is the study of human language –language comprehension, language production, and language acquisition (E.M. Hatch).

English Language Teaching

English teaching in India has gone on in very long time. English has been taught in India since the proclamation of India as a first foreign language. It has been taught at the first year junior high schools up to the third year senior high schools, and at the university for several semesters. Even, nowadays, English is taught at the elementary schools as the local content subject.

All of us may have known that the various efforts for improving approaches, methods and techniques have been done. The English Teaching Curriculum has been changed or improved from time to time. The various supporting books and textbooks have been written by many writers and those are published by the various publishers. Now, we can ask ourselves: "How is the result of English teaching in our schools?", or "Does it make us our school students have good competence and performance in using the language?" Our empirical experience shows that many students fail in their English learning and that they regard the language as the difficult subject to learn.

Starting from the assumption, the students are not motivated in learning English until they have a good mastery of the language. They tend to be alphabetic in attending the English subject. As a consequence, their learning achievement is not satisfactory. Who is wrong in our English teaching, our students, our teachers or others? Of course, we will not find"who are wrong and what is wrong" in the failure of our English teaching. Because, in fact, when we want to evaluate an educational undertaking, many factors or variables have to be considered. In English teaching, there are teacher, learner, and socio-cultural factors.

Significance of Linguistics

Linguistics is important for language teaching because linguistics and language teaching can be likened to the relationship of knowledge about engine and the skill in driving a car. It will be better for the driver to be supported with some knowledge about the car or the engine so that he can drive it well and know how to overcome some engine trouble in case he has to face it. In the same way it will be better if a language teacher has some knowledge about, for instance, the characteristics of language in general and the specific language he is teaching in particular. In this relation, he should know how language works and express meaning, and what structures are used in the particular language he is teaching. He should get familiar, for instance, with the theory about the general mechanism of producing speech sounds, so that he will be able to tackle any pronunciation problem his students may encounter.

By studying linguistics he will have deeper insights into the nature of language, and act accordingly in teaching the language. For instance, when he agrees that the use of language is a matter of habits and practice, in teaching it to his students he must implant the habit of using it for communication until it becomes deeply established.

Linguistics is a major that provides insight into one of the most intriguing aspects of human knowledge and behavior. Majoring in linguistics means learning about many aspects of human language, including sounds (phonetics, phonology), words (morphology), sentences (syntax), and meaning (semantics). It can involve looking at how languages change over time (historical linguistics); how language varies from situation to situation, group to group, and place to place (sociolinguistics, dialectology); how people use language in context (pragmatics, discourse analysis); how to model aspects of language (computational linguistics); how people acquire or learn language (language acquisition); and how people process language (psycholinguistics, experimental linguistics).

Language teaching is said to be the activities which are intended to bring about language learning. It is more widely interpreted than instructing a language class. Formal instruction and methods of training, preparation of teaching materials, as well as making the necessary administrative provision inside and outside an educational system all fall under the concept of language teaching. According to Stern (1983), a good language teaching would meet the conditions and needs of learners in the best possible ways. It would strive to provide a conceptual framework devised for identifying all factors relevant in the teaching of languages and the relationship(s) between them for giving effective direction to the necessary research and enquiry. Jesa (2008) argues that the aim of teaching English language is to make the learner an effective user of the language. He mentions of the general objectives of teaching English language as follows: In listening, the general objectives of teaching English are to enable the learner to comprehend English when spoken at normal conversational speed; In speaking, the general objectives of teaching English are to enable the learner to speak English with fluency, accuracy and appropriateness; In reading, the general objectives of teaching English are to enable the learner to read English with comprehension at a reasonable speed; In writing, the general objective of teaching English are to enable the learner to write English neatly and correctly.

Linguistics in Language Teaching

The obvious reason for considering the role of linguistics in relation to language teaching is that both in different ways have to do with language. It would be unreasonable for language teaching to disregard what linguistics has to say about language. Linguistics is the science of languages, and the major concern of all the Linguists is largely related to the finding and

describing the characteristics of a particular language(s). The concern of linguistics as well as of language teaching is grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Hence both are concerned with different objectives with the same material, and have a give-and- take relationship. Linguistics has provided a number of grammars out of which better pedagogical grammars can be built. With the help of the phonetic alphabet and other phonetic insights, the learning-teaching of pronunciation has been greatly facilitated. The greatest contribution of linguistics is to increase one understands of the nature of language. Linguistics helps in taking fundamental decisions such as which languages are to be taught up to what time and at what level in an educational system. the main role of linguistics in language teaching is to produce good descriptions of languages. Then these descriptions of language serve as the input to language teaching materials (Wilkins (1972,p. 216). Methods of language teaching like fashions have been changing along with the developments in linguistics. So linguistics helps in determining the place and position of a foreign language in a syllabus and also helps in determining the aims and objectives of the teaching of the target language.

Since teaching is to take through txt-books, linguistics can help the text-book writer to prepare linguistically sound, learners' need-based textbooks. Linguistics can also contribute in the selection and gradation of vocabulary and structures. Linguistic is the general principles in which languages are constructed. Thus, both linguistic and language teaching take language as their subject (Freeman & Freeman, 2004, p. 71). The main role of linguistics in language teaching is to produce good descriptions of languages. From the linguistics levels of phonetics and phonology, language teaching have benefitted from the description of sounds of human languages. The primacy of speech in language teaching can be attributed to the influence of structural linguistics, the interest in the descriptive study of the spoken language. Phonetics studies speech sounds as such regardless of a particular language, while phonology investigates the sound system of a particular language. Phonetics can be considered as helpful to pronunciation teaching (oral) in that it provides the language teacher with a diagnostic understanding of how speech are produced. Phonology is needed to understand what constitutes the sound system of a particular languages and how the sounds are internalized by speakers for the purpose of communication. Linguistics and language teaching are often considered to be two very relevant fields of study for they have the same subject matter to handle. Linguistics as the study of language, a human phenomenon, is now an autonomous and well developed discipline of social science (D. A. Wilkins states, 1972, p.215).

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