

***Lectures in Linguistics (based on Aitchison's "Teach Yourself Linguistics")***

***Dep. Of English Language and Linguistics***

***College of Education for Women***

***University of Anbar***

***By Instructor Shaymaa Yaseen Thabit, [shaymay692@gmail.com](mailto:shaymay692@gmail.com)***

**The Study of Language**

Linguistics before the nineteenth century in the western world was of interest mainly to philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle when the former was the first person to distinguish between nouns and verbs as parts of speech.

After the Greek philosophers came in 1786, which is considered the birthdate of linguistics, the discovery of an Englishman that called Sir William Jones, that Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Celtic, and German languages all had structural similarities.

Inspired by Jones's discovery, many scholars wrote comparative grammars between these languages and named an ancestor for these languages called Proto-Indo-European languages for the next hundred years.

In 1875, a group of scholars centered around Leipzig in Germany , nicknamed as Young Grammarians, claimed that language change is regular. They argued that if in any word of a given dialect, one sound changes into another, the change will also affect all other occurrences of the same sound in similar phonetic surroundings. For example,, in Old English the word chin was pronounced as 'kin' (spelt *cinn*). The change from a **k**-sound into a **ch**-sound affected all other **k**-sounds which occurred at the beginning of a word before **e** or **i**. So we get ( chicken, chill, cheese, cheek, chew...) all of these words were pronounced with a **k**- sound in the beginning of these words.

In the twentieth century, and more specifically in 1915, the emphasis shifted from language change to language description. Linguists began to concentrate on describing single languages at one particular point in time. The Swiss Linguist Ferdinand De Saussure had his lectures published by his students under the title "A Course in General Linguistics" after his death. He is considered the father of modern linguistics in Europe.

De Saussure's contribution was his statement that all language items are essentially interlinked. His insistence that language is a carefully built structure of interwoven elements initiated the era of "structural linguistics". He explained that each language element, for example phonology, has a relationship with other language elements such as grammar, to build a system of its own, just like the game of chess.

In 1930, the American Structuralist Leonard Bloomfield published his famous book entitled "Language" in which he attempted to lay down rigorous scientific procedures for the description of any language.

Bloomfield considered that linguistics should deal objectively and systematically with observable data. He considered meaning as the weak point in the study of language, which is we'll discover later on to be incorrect. Bloomfieldian era lasted for more than twenty years. During this time, linguists concentrated on writing descriptive grammars of unwritten languages. This involved finding native speakers, collecting their corpus data, then analyzing this data to find patterns of phonology and grammar without recourse to meaning. Linguists invented discovery procedures to enable them to uncover the linguistic units of an unwritten language. We'll note after a while that meaning is the turning point of the new coming Structuralists who are called generativists as they generate rules of grammar depending on surface structure and deep structure of the English sentence.