

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

Dep. of English Language and Linguistics

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From Structuralism to Generativism

The pioneers of structuralism in Europe and America symbolized by De Saussure in Switzerland, and Bloomfield in America proved their interesting theories about the structure of language symbolized by a game of chess in its integrated items of language which were studied systematically and objectively by linguists from the collected data of the native speakers.

In **1957**, linguistics took a new turning, Noam Chomsky, a teacher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, published a book called "Syntactic Structures". In this book, Chomsky shifted attention away from detailed description of actual utterances. A grammar, he claimed, should be more than a description of old utterances. It should also take into account possible future utterances. Chomsky pointed out that a language must have internalized a set of rules which specify the sequences permitted in their language. In his opinion, a linguist's task is to discover these rules, which constitute the grammar of the language. Chomsky used the word "grammar" to mean the person's internalized rules and a linguist's guess as to these rules.

A grammar which consists of a set of statements or rules which specify which sequences of a language is possible, and which impossible is called a **generative grammar** by Chomsky. So, he initiated the era of generative linguistics. An explicit grammar in which the rules must be formulated in such a way that anyone would be able to separate the well-formed sentences from the ill-formed ones, even if they didn't know a word of the language concerned, is called a transformational grammar.