

A webinar on

An overview of the linguistic approaches in the 20th century

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18. 2. 2023



Introduction

- Language, Linguistics, and Linguist
- The principles of modern linguistics
- Structural linguistics (Ferdinand de Saussure)
- Functional linguistics (Michael Halliday)
- Descriptive linguistics (Leonard Bloomfield)
- Generative linguistics (Noam Chomsky)



Language, Linguistics, and Linguist

- ✓ Language is a means of *communication*.
- ✓ Linguistics is the scientific study of language.
- ✓ A linguist is someone who *deals with* language.



The principles of modern linguistics

- ✓ Principle 1: 'The spoken language comes first.'
- ✓ Principle 2: 'Linguistics is descriptive, not prescriptive.'



Structural linguistics: De Saussure's ideas

- ▶ Signifier vs signified
- ▶ Synchronic vs diachronic
- ▶ Syntagmatic relations vs paradigmatic relations
- ▶ Langue vs parole



Structural linguistics: language as a system of relations

- ▶ “Language is a system of *relations* with no positive terms, only differences”.
- ▶ “It is the relations between elements in the system, rather than the elements themselves, which are meaningful”.



Functional linguistics: Language is a semantic system

- ▶ In essence, the development of this kind of linguistics was **a reaction** to the more abstract approaches associated with Chomskyan TG.
- ▶ What matters is the semantic role of the sentence elements, not their grammatical role. For example:

John broke the window.

The window was broken.



Functional linguistics: Functions of language

1. **The ideational function:** the use we make of language to **conceptualize** the world. Language is seen as an **instrument of thought**. *(mind)*
2. **The interpersonal function:** the use we make of language as a **personal medium**. Language is seen as an **instrument of transaction**. *(speaker)*
3. **The textual function:** the use we make of language to **form texts**, whether spoken or written. Language is seen as an **instrument of communication**. *(speaker + listener)*



Descriptive linguistics

- ▶ The **Descriptivists' goal** was accounting for an observed corpus of linguistic data.
- ▶ Their pioneer was Leonard Bloomfield, who published his famous book 'language' in 1933.



Generative linguistics

- ▶ Avram Noam Chomsky was born to a middle-class Jewish family in Philadelphia in 1928.
- ▶ obtaining a PhD in 1955
- ▶ Published syntactic structures in 1957
- ▶ Currently Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he has worked since 1955
- ▶ Well known for his trenchant views on the United States foreign Policy
- ▶ His latest work was in 2015, as far as I know. (Problems of Projection)
- ▶ Still alive...



Generative linguistics: generative syntax

- ▶ PSG: focusing on PS-rules in declarative sentences (1957)
- ▶ ST: psycholinguistics (competence vs performance) & syntax (neglecting the role of meaning: syntax is not based on meaning), focusing on transformations (Deep structure & surface structure) (1965)
- ▶ EST: adding meaning component (early 1970s)
- ▶ REST: the appearance of X-bar theory (mid-1970s)



Generative linguistics: generative syntax

- ▶ GB: principles and parameters on the basis of 7 modules (1981)
- ▶ MP: the principle of economy, interface levels: PF & LF, ejecting X-bar theory from the grammar, Numeration (1993)
- ▶ GB's PS-rules have turned to be merged in MP, and transformations to Copy + Delete
- ▶ Universal grammar → syntax, language acquisition, psycholinguistics

The end

Thanks for being with us!

**Now
a question-and-answer session**

