

A Handbook of Linguistics...

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A HANDBOOK OF LINGUISTICS

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About The Author



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About The Book

The intention of writing this book 'A Simple Handbook of Linguistics' is to provide basic knowledge about Linguistics in the Modern World. The introduction about language, its origin, and linguistics are explained briefly. In Linguistics, the branches and its application are also given. Moreover the brief introduction about Phonetics and Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Semantics are found in this book. The application of semantics in lexicography is given in the final chapter.

I hope that these basic concepts of Linguistics will stimulate and understanding of the subject. By reading this book, surely the interest in reading and learning will be increased. And this will pay the way to know more about the discipline Linguistics. I am sure that this book will be helpful not only to the language readers but also to the students.

I thank the linguists who read the draft and gave comments for the better improvement of the concepts of Linguistics.

I thank my teachers who taught me Linguistics directly or indirectly and my friends in Linguistic Studies.

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From...

Franklin Thambi Jose.S

Contents List

S. No.	Chapter	Page no.
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Phonetics and Phonology	9
3.	Morphology and its concepts	71
4.	Syntax and Syntactic Structures	96
5.	Semantics and its application	109
-	References	120

Introduction

1

LANGUAGE

All the people in this world speak at least a language to express their own ideas, thoughts, feelings etc. Some people express through gesture also. Even signboards, symbols, pictures, drawings, and so on communicate with us. In the early days people used such concepts to communicate among themselves.

Language is defined by various scholars in different ways according to their understanding. Hockett (1958) has defined language as, ‘a system of systems’. It can also be defined as ‘a complex system of habits’. Wardhaugh (1972) has defined as ‘a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication’.

The key term of these definitions is ‘system’. This system can be divided into two, system of sounds and the system of meanings. The system of sounds of a language allows number of sounds to be used again and again in different

combinations to form the next unit meaning. The system of meanings allows this unit of meaning to be arranged in an infinite number of ways to express simple and complicated ideas and thoughts.

So both systems go together in a language. The communication starts with these systems. Most of the time, people communicate with each other without considering the complexity of the language. They use simple language which consists of complex words and sentences.

LANGUAGE USE

Cook (2003) says, 'language is at the heart of human life'. Language is used in a society in different aspects. Language has to be expressed with words and sentences. Some interesting instances are given here where we use language. We use, in family, making friends, learning, falling in love, being parent, religious faith, political ideals, political action, preparation and eating food, playing, listening, etc.

People in this world use language to gossip, to chat, to flirt and seduce, to play games, to sing songs, to tell stories, to teach, to worship, to insult others, to pass the information, to make deals, to remember past, to lament the dead and so on.

ORIGIN OF THE LANGUAGE

Human language originated when humans were happily living together in a place or society.

Jespersen (1921) says, 'Language was born in the courting days of mankind'. Further he says that human language originated while humans were enjoying themselves.

According to The Bible, God created Adam and said in Genesis 2 19 that 'what so ever Adam called every creature, that was the name there of'. It has clearly mentioned that Adam named and called each and every creature in the world. Again it can be seen in the history that, when Babel tower was under construction, God stopped their construction by allowing them to speak different languages, which they couldn't understand among themselves and scattered to other parts of the world. This is mentioned in The Bible in Genesis 11 9 as, 'because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth'.

Language experts so called Linguists suggested some concepts of natural sounds. The birds produce the sounds 'caw caw', 'kuu kuu' and so on. This concept was adopted in human language. Basically echo pronunciations can be seen in human language. These echo words are from the sounds of animals and birds. Bow-wow, baa-baa, meu-meu, woof-woof are some of the onomatopoeic words, which paved the way for framing certain theories related to language.

LANGUAGE AND DIALECTS

Languages are spoken in different places/areas in the world. According to the culture, society etc. the

variety of the language changes. Even within the border of one nation or country, people may speak different languages. In Indian context, even in the border of Southern Indian boarder people speak different languages. For instance, in the southern borders of Karnataka Malayalam language is spoken even though Kannada is spoken throughout Karnataka State. Sometimes within a country a variety of languages may be spoken. Such variety can be said as linguistic variety. Finegan (2004) says, ‘wherever speakers of a language are separated by geographical or social distances, considerable linguistic variation is likely to rise’. The varieties can be seen in Hindi language spoken in Bihar and Haryana. The variation found within a language is called as a Dialect. Dialect differs from region to region within a nation. They also differ across age groups, ethnic groups and socio-economic boundaries. In Malaysia, local Malay and Indian ethnic groups speak different languages even though they live together in the same city. Similarly, middle class and working class speakers can often be distinguished from one another by their characteristic speech. Dialect is a part of a society in which we speak a language.

LINGUISTICS

In this modern world, people ask, how many languages you know when one tells about ‘linguistics’. People think linguistics means learning many languages which is not true.

Linguistics is defined as the scientific study of a language. Crystal (2003) calls Linguistics as 'Linguistics Science'. Linguistics is the science of language, including the sounds, words, and grammar rules. Words in languages are finite, but sentences are not.

The rules of a language is called grammar which are learned when one acquires a language. The rules include **phonology**, the sound system, **morphology**, the structure of words, **syntax**, the combination of words into phrases, clauses and sentences, **semantics**, the ways in which sounds and meanings are related. When you know a language, you know words in that language, i.e. sound units that are related to specific meanings.

Languages can be proved scientifically with the Linguistic theories.

For example

VERB + TENSE (Tense occurs only with verbs)

So a word which takes tense as a part of it, then that word can be said as verb in grammar.

Linguistics is not an inherently difficult subject. The scholars who are specialist in Linguistics are called as Linguists. The Linguists distinguishes between language and writing, whereas the ordinary man termed as layman tends to confuse the two. The layman's spoken language and written language suggest that speech and writing are merely two different manifestations

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