Chapter 12 Theories and Schools of Modern linguistics

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1. Modern linguistics began from the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), who is often described as “father of modern linguistics”. His lectures are collected in the book “Course in General Linguistics”.

2. Saussure believed that language is a System of Signs. This sign is the union of a form and an idea, which he called the signifier and the signified.

3. Saussure’s ideas on the arbitrary nature of sign, on the relational nature of linguistic units, on the distinction of Langue and Parole and of Synchronic and Diachronic linguistics pushed linguistics into a brand new stage.
12.1 The Prague School

12.1.1 Introduction
1) The Prague School can be traced back to its first meeting under the leadership of V. Mathesius in 1926. This school practiced a special style of synchronic linguistics, and its most important contribution to linguistics is that it sees language in terms of function.

2) Three most important ideas developed in Prague School

12.1.2 Phonology & Phonological Oppositions
1) The Prague School is best known for its contribution to phonology and the distinction of phonetics and phonology.

2) Its representative is Trubetzkoy.

3) Oppositions (a---l)
   - bilateral opposition; multilateral opposition; proportional opposition; isolated opposition;
   - privative opposition; gradual opposition; equivalent opposition; neutralisable opposition;
   - constant opposition.

12.1.3 Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP)
1) Theme & Rheme.
2) Communicative Dynamism (CD).
Picture from the International Phonetic Congress, Amsterdam 1932
The person in the middle is the Dutch linguist Jac. van Ginneken; on his left is Nikolaj Trubetzkoy
12.2 The London School

12.2.1 Malinowski’s theories

12.2.2 Firth’s theories
   1) language is a means of doing things and of making others do things.
   2) Prosodic Analysis.

12.2.3 Halliday & Systemic- Functional Grammar
   1) Systemic Grammar
   2) Functional Grammar
      i) **The ideational function** is to convey new information, to communicate a content that is unknown to the hearer.
      ii) **The interpersonal function** embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations.
      iii) **The textual function** refers to the fact that language has mechanisms to make any stretch of spoken or written discourse into a coherent and unified text and make a living passage different from a random of sentences.
12.3 American Structuralism

12.3.1 Early Period: Boas & Sapir

12.3.2 Bloomfield’s theory
- 1) Bloomfieldian Era
- 2) Behaviourism
- 3) Stimulus-Response

12.3.3 Post- Bloomfieldian Linguistics
- 1) Harris & Methods in Structural Linguistics
- 2) Hockett & A Course in Modern Linguistics
- 3) K. Pike & Tagmemics
12.4 Transformational-Generative Grammar
1) Chomsky’s *Syntactic Structure* (1957) marked the beginning of the Chomskyan Revolution.

2) TG Grammar has seen five stages of development since its birth: the Classical Theory; the Standard Theory; the Extended Theory; the Revised Extended Standard Theory and the Minimalist Program.

12.4.1 the Innateness Hypothesis

language is innate, and children are born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD).

12.4.2 What is a Generative Grammar?

1) By a Generative Grammar, Chomsky simply means “a system of rules that in some explicit and well-defined way assigns structural descriptions to sentences.

2) Chomsky put forward three different levels to evaluate grammar on: Observational Adequacy; Descriptive Adequacy and the Explanatory adequacy.

12.4.3 The Classical Theory

12.4.4 The Standard Theory

12.4.5 The Extended-Standard Theory

12.4.6 Later Theories
12.5 Revisionists? Rebels?

12.5.1 Case Grammar

Case Grammar is an approach that stresses the relationship of elements in a sentence. It is a type of generative grammar developed by C.J. Fillmore in the late 1960s. In this grammar, the verb is the most important part of the sentence, and has a number of case-making relationships with various noun phrases.

12.5.2 Generative Semantics.

Generative Semantics, developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, is a reaction to Chomsky’s Syntactic- based TG Grammar. The leading figures are J.R. Ross, G. Lakoff, J.D. Cawley, and P. Postal. Generative Semantics considers that all sentences are generated from a semantic structure. Generative Semantics holds that there is no principled distinction between syntactic processes and semantic processes.
Questions for Discussion

1. Why is Saussure hailed as the father of modern linguistics?
2. What are the three important points of the Prague School?
3. What is the essence of Functional Sentence Perspective?
4. What is special about systemic – Functional linguistics?
5. What are the special features of American structuralism?
6. How is behaviorist Psychology related to linguistics?
7. How many stages of development has Chomsky’s TG Grammar undergone?
8. What is special about TG Grammar?
9. What is Case Grammar?