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Approaches To The Language Study Traditional Grammar Vs. Linguistics

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Traditional Grammar stands for the basically Aristotelian orientation toward the nature of language as seen in the endeavors of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, the speculative work of the medieval and the prescriptive approach of the eighteenth century grammarians.

Linguistics refers to the empirical, structural approach to language as represented chiefly by American linguistics during '40s and mid' '50s.

The distinctions between the two in term of classifications and rules are those that distinguish empirical sciences and humanistic studies.

1. Traditional Grammar, in defining language classes, and rules tends to be subjective while Linguistics through structural analysis of the phonology, morphology and syntax of a language tends to be objective.

2. Traditional grammar tries to assign the reason why certain grammatical features of language occur and how they must behave. Linguistics structural grammars merely state the observable facts of language without an attempt to explain observable facts of language without an attempt to explain their non-linguistic correspondences.

3. Traditional grammar confuses levels of analysis in describing morphologically defined classes. In a sentence like walking is healthful walking is often said to be 'considered as' a noun or "taking the place of" a noun. Other words are said to be "understood" in expressions like Good: Dog is described as a noun " dog house".

Linguistics takes up various levels of analysis, viz. morphological at which level 'nouns' 'verbs' and as on can be defined for English, syntactic where morphological 'nouns' may have the same distribution as morphologically defined "adjectives".

4. In the root of traditional grammar is its cultural history linking it upto a fundamentally Aristotelian psychological theory of a dualistic type with the semantic doctrines of the medieval and the individual preferences of the eighteenth century authors.

    Structural linguistics, at its best, has rescinded from disputed psychological, logical or metaphysical systems. The facts recorded in such empirical description are amenable to any of the other systems

5. As the Greek enquiry into the nature of language started with logic traditional grammar has unthinkingly taken the declarative sentence as "basic". The "Parts of Speech" are defined, therefore, according to their function in that sentence type alone. Other sentence types are "explained" as deviant forms of the declarative sentence from which they are supposed to be derived by a conscious psychological process.

Structural Linguistics takes all the utterances on the same terms stating the distinguishable behavior of formally different types. Declarative sentence is taken to be basic on the noun of frequency and descriptive convenience. It goes much ahead the apriori psychological assumptions of the traditionalists

6. Traditional grammar does not adequately distinguish (a) lexical, morphological and syntactic meanings: (b) difference between grammatically minimal and stylistically permissible combinations and constructions, and (c) particular and universal features of language. Linguist try to account for the complexities of language at different levels of analysis through scientific and empirical description providing a tool for comparing other languages and lastly finding out, what Chomsky calls, the "Linguistic Universals".

The most recent development in Linguistics have returnedto the traditional goals of grammatical work but with the rigour of the formal structural methods developed bylinguists over a period of many years. Now its' being felt that the two approaches combined together will yield better, exact and productive understanding of language and languages.

Modern Descriptive Linguistics

Modern descriptive linguistics sets out with the rejection of the nineteenth century historical study as the sole scientific approach to language. De -sausswee initiated it on sociological model advocating a dualistic treatment of meaning. Sapir sounded the similarities among linguistic, psychological and anthropological factors stressing relations between language and culture Bloom-field formulated strict descriptive measures to establish linguistics as an autonomous descriptive. J.R. Firth frowned at the phonemically basedstudies of Bloomfield. Although he agreed partially to his monistic approach he suggested a new situational approach to the statement of meanings. Hajelmslev formulated the immediate constituent description of language in logics - deductive terms.Chomsky formulates a synthesis by accepting many traditional grammatical goals and pre-suppositions with the rigorous formal methods that have been developed in linguistics and other sciences.

Linguistics is defined as a scientific study of language as the empirical methods of the sciences are employed to bring the precision and control of scientific investigation to the study of language. This activity and the development of the techniques required for its practice can be called descriptive linguistics. It tends to empirical exact and objective. This kind of scientific approach to language may very well be contrasted with the humanistic approach as the goals and methods of the two stands in polarity.

Linguists have found by experience and experiments in the field that language has several features that provide a basis for accurate description: viz.

1. Language is sound (primarily)
2. Language is Linear.
3. Language is systematic.
4. Language is a system of systems.
5. Language is meaningful.
6. Language is Arbitrary.
7. Language is conventional.
8. Language is system of contrasts.
9. Language is creative.
10. Language are unique.
11. Language are similar.

Since all languages are sound primarily they can, as a result, be

represented as 'Linear'. All languages are systematic both in the permissible combination of language sounds and in the combination of meaningful elements of the language. Language is, meaningful as the sounds produced by the speakers are connected with factors other than language itself. The relation between the sounds produced by the speakers and their meanings establishes that the relation is both arbitrary and conventional.

Since the primary focus of the description is on the patterns of sounds and the sound sequences of a language the description is called formal. Another primary focus of the description is on the contrasts among units and patterns of units, the description is called structural.

Thus in brief - each linguistic unit is definable in terms of its characteristic composition, distribution and function.

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