

INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS

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Preface to Second Edition

When the national economy got shattered for the first time and many did not know how to handle the situation, there was a standstill in all the good things we used to enjoy. In the educational sector, the immediate manifestation of the disaster was the non-availability of textbooks and valuable educational materials. The Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Ilorin got thinking and ventured into writing textbooks using scraps from lecture notes. The venture was undertaken for a much larger reason than providing texts; we wanted to teach self-reliance. To this effect, we challenged our colleagues in various departments inside and outside this University to follow our experimental lead. Since then, in this department alone, no less than twelve textbooks have been produced. More gladdening still is the fact that books are flooding Nigeria markets today, not just in linguistics, but in the sciences, arts, and the social sciences. Fiction writers are emboldened too!

This edition is a slightly revised version of our lecture notes series. The success it enjoyed all over Nigeria has told the story we are proud to hear. I may add that we have not gone into elaborate revision because our customers are satisfied. Rather than make them procure different versions of the same text, we have re-channelled the revisions into writing more comprehensive books.

I seize this opportunity to appreciate the patience of our contributors who were not in a hurry for immediate financial gratification while we were experimenting on prices, cosmetic appearance, and more importantly helping our students by not making material remuneration our primary aim.

Also, I appreciate the editorial assistance and advice from Abíḍún Oyebólá, Bósèdé Sótílóyè, Títí Afòkè and Professor Quadri while I was re-typesetting this edition. It is also gratefully recorded that John and Janie Stark's altruistically donated SIL fonts came in good time to enhance this production.

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1

LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

1.1 Introduction

Intuitively we know what language is. Furthermore, whichever way one words the definition, we may not catch all the characteristics of language in one fell swoop. However, we shall attempt a few working definitions of what language is, definitions which we shall amend and supplement in this and other chapters of the book. For a start, language is defined as a "system of vocal auditory communication using conventional signs composed of arbitrary patterned sound units and assembled according to set rules, interacting with the experience of its users" (Bolinger 1968:12).

Language can be studied along many dimensions. The study of these different aspects of language is the concern of linguistics. In more traditional understanding of linguistics, it may be equated with the study of grammar, where 'grammar' may be conceived as structured thus:

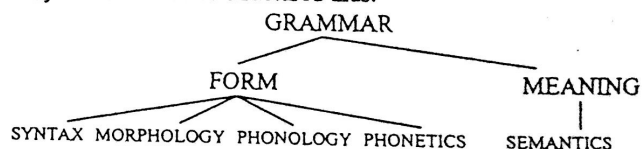


Fig. 1. Branches of Grammar

Linguistics is actually involved in more than the study of grammar. With the rise of Chomsky's model of linguistics

HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS

12.0 Introduction

The origin of Linguistics dates back to many centuries. Robins (1967) asserts that this branch of knowledge started as early as the fifth century before Christ, with a decent ancestry, though the use of term in referring to language analysis only came to being in the nineteenth century.

Linguistics, though has been described as the scientific study of language (Lyons 1968:1), we also see it as an aspect that is related to history. This is so, because it equally builds on its past. It is therefore possible for linguistics to challenge certain doctrines, even human history. For example, the Traditional Grammar has been challenged as normative or prescriptive. Thus according to Lyons (1968:43), linguistics should be descriptive not prescriptive. Even in some cases, it refuted such doctrines, motivating a continuous revision and reformulation. The birth of structural grammar, no less than transformational grammar was as a result of input from the history of linguistics whereby the inadequacies in older grammars were challenged.

Of necessity, we can only take a bird's eye-view of the history of linguistics, starting with the Greeks, Romans, and subsequently moving to Europe, India and America. We would lay more emphasis on America, Britain, and eventually, touch on the Nigerian scene.

12.1.0 Linguistics in the Early Times:

Our earliest time in this study refers to Greece and Rome from the fifth century BC to about the thirteenth century AD.

12.1.1 Greece

Greece, though a small country, served as the forerunner of many things in the ancient times. It is a country that is accredited as the origin of the shaping of modern civilization. According to Awoyale (1983, in class lectures), 'Greece among the world nations happened to see the light first. In sports, Athens and Sparta, two of its cities are well known. In the same vein, most of what we know in linguistics today started from Greece. One example will suffice. The Greek grammarians such as Thrax and Protagoras were the first to attempt word classification called *parts of speech*. The Greek philosophers and thinkers best known for their shrewd inquiries about things, even things thought to be trivial, too influenced series of investigations in linguistics as well as the problems raised by such investigations even later in Europe. Indeed, this is what led to the linguistic science today.

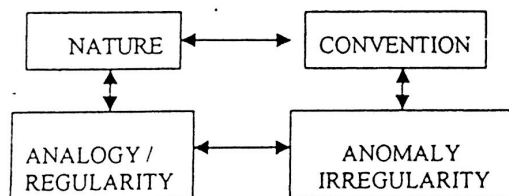
The Greeks probably took the first steps into the study of language with their awareness of speakers of languages other than Greek as well as variation within the Greek language itself. During the second millennium BC, the Mycenaeans made use of a syllabic writing system that included some *logograms* (the use of symbols to represent words in a language). By the first millennium BC, the Greeks had developed the alphabetic system for writing their language. The birth of the Stoic and Alexandrian schools of thought during the Hellenistic age (300 BC) gave a new dimension to linguistics as it then took a defined place within the overall context of philosophy. Linguistic questions were fully addressed in series of works that were devoted to various aspects of language. The position of language under the Stoics can be understood in the following passage:

First comes the impression, then the mind making use of speech, expresses in words, the experience produced by the 'impression...' All things are discerned through dialectic studies.... Most people are agreed that it is proper to begin the study of dialectics from the part of it dealing with speech.

(Robins 1967)

From the above, one can deduce that the belief of the Stoics is that language serves as an instrument that can be used to express one's opinion. In fact, there is virtually nothing that one cannot understand through language (See Yusuf 1998. See Unit 1, this volume). Another significant thing about the Stoics is that they formalized the dichotomy between *form* and *meaning*. The form according to them means the *signifier*, whereas the meaning denotes the *signified*. These terms are similar to Ferdinand de Saussure's union of sound and thought as expressed in his work entitled *Cours de linguistique*. The Greeks also gave separate treatment to phonetics, etymology, and syntax. More progress was made in phonetics. The Alexandrians and the Stoics considered all language-related issues within two parallel phenomena of nature and convention respectively.

During the time under review, there were rival claims made on behalf of nature as against convention in the first place and of regularity or analogy as against irregularity or anomaly in the second. This division is in respect of the control of man's speech and a proper understanding of its working. This we schematize as:



According to Lyons (1968:6) those who maintained that language was essentially systematic and irregular (the Alexandrians) are generally called analogists while those who hold a contrary view (the Stoics) are referred to as anomalists. The division came as a result of a debate on issues such as the relations between words

and their meaning. For example, there is the question: Are meaning of words based on their natural affinity or mere convention and agreement? The naturalists based their argument on the weight of onomatopoeia (formation of words in imitation of the sounds associated with the thing/object concerned) in a vocabulary. The conventionalist on the other hand, pointed out that vocabulary can be changed at will. The controversy raises the question: To what extent is the regularity operative in the Greek language and by implication in language as a whole? Similarly, the argument wants to provide answer to the question: To what extent are the irregularities and anomalies characterized by the Greek language? (See Jespersen 1922:19). Examples of 'regular' patterns often cited can be found in plural formation in English such as *book: books*, *bag: bags*, *cow: cows*. The counter examples usually referred to by their opponents include *child: children*, *ox: oxen*, *sheep: sheep*, *man: men* etc. Some of the apostles of 'regularity' even went to the extreme by trying to reconstruct Greek irregular paradigms in line with the principle of analogical regularity. The Anomalists on the other hand do not believe in the equation of biuniqueness of word and meaning. According to them, no word exists in isolation, and once a word is put in use, there is the tendency for it to change its meaning.

The greatest contribution of the Greek scholars in the field of linguistics is however in the area of syntax. Their work serves as foundation on which modern Grammarians build their own language study (cf.: Awoyale 1992). One point to also add is the fact that the Greek grammarians at this time concentrated on the written language rather than the oral or verbal form. There are three dimensions to the study of 'word':

1. The study of word in isolation or citation
2. The part of speech a word belongs to
3. The syntactic relationship between words in construction.

The Greek grammarians even though were divided into two by the second century BC in their approach to language study had the following to their credit.

1. They made a distinction between inflected and uninflected words
2. They made a distinction between proper and common nouns
3. They were the first to identify cases as an inflectional category
4. They also recognized three categories of verbs namely: active (transitive) passive and neutral (intransitive) verbs.
5. They equally identified 'aspect' as a separate class which they divided into complete and incomplete and introduced what they called 'time' which means 'tense' in modern usage.

On the whole, linguistic records on Greek language include work of presocratic philosophers, the fifth century rhetoricians (orators), Socrates, Protagoras, Plato and Aristotle. Others are Zeno Stoic the founder of the Stoic school of thought, Epicurus, Dionysius Thrax and Aristarchus. Only a sketch of their contributions is attempted in this chapter.

12.1.1.1 Protagoras

Protagoras was well known for word classification. The parameter used was gender distinction. Thus he classified Greek words into masculine, feminine and neuter.

12.1.1.2 Plato

Plato who lived between 429 and 347 BC also contributed immensely to the linguistic analysis of the Greek language. He was the first person to make an explicit distinction between nouns and

verbs. His distinction was functional. For example, nouns were referred to as words that could function as subjects of a predication, while verbs were terms which could express the action or quality predicated.

12.1.1.3 Dionysius Thrax

Dionysius Thrax lived around the second century BC. His first contribution was on spellings of Greek words. In the field of syntax, he came up with eight parts of speech: Nouns, Verb, Particle, Article, Pronoun, Preposition, Adverb and Conjunction. His work was considered the first comprehensive and systematic description of the Greek.

12.1.1.4 Zeno Stoic and His Disciples

Zeno and his followers are referred to as the Stoics. They formed a formidable school of thought which contributed meaningfully to linguistic scholarship as they gave more attention to language than any other philosopher of their time. They succeeded in making distinction between form and meaning. The earlier members of the school classified Greek words into four parts of speech, namely, Noun, Verb, Conjunction and Article. They also recognized the existence of Case in Greek nouns. Finally, they distinguished between the active and passive on the one hand and transitive and intransitive verbs on the other.

12.1.2.0 Linguistics in Rome

Next in hierarchy in the development of linguistics in the early times is Rome. Like Greece, those that championed the courses of Latin grammar were Roman philosophers and thinkers. The Greek scholars greatly influence their Roman counterparts. In fact according to Lyons (1968:13), "It is a matter of common knowledge that in every sphere of Roman scholarship, art and literature, Greek influence was supreme". No wonder therefore that the Latin grammarians took after Greek models in their analysis of

the Latin language. The Greeks were said to have for a long time settled in the south of Italy. This afforded the Romans the opportunity to have a pre-knowledge of Greek approach to language study. Indeed most of the controversies that cropped up among Greek philosophers on the Greek language have semblance in Latin. Varro's work (see below) on Latin was greatly influenced by both the Alexandrians and the Stoics. One major factor that facilitated the transfer of such linguistic knowledge is the relatively similar basic structures of Greek and Latin languages.

The study of Latin anchored on three main headings, namely: etymology, morphology and syntax. We observe that there were also divisions among scholars who worked on Latin which went along Greek's dimensions. According to Marcus Varro, a Latin scholar, both principles expressed by the Analogists and Anomalists must be recognized and accepted in word formations of a language and in the meanings associated with them.

Latin grammar was studied along three different ways. Firstly, the scope of grammar was seen as the art of correct speech and of the understanding of the poets. Other things associated with this first dimension deal with letters and syllables. Secondly is the treatment of the parts of speech. The third aspect concentrated on grammaticality versus ungrammaticality. The last focused on whether one's style of speech is good or bad, as well as whether one's expression is barbaric or not. Let us examine the specific contributions of some Roman scholars to Latin.

12.1.2.1 Marcus Varro

Marcus Varro who lived between 116-27 BC had great input to an indepth study of Latin. He was said to have been influenced by Stoic thought, Alexandrian doctrine and Thrax writings. His contributions were contained in his work titled *De lingua Latin* 'On the Latin Language'. This was a combined work on Latin grammar under three main headings: etymology, morphology, and

syntax, produced into books of twenty six volumes. However, not all the volumes survived.

One thing of note in Varro's work is that he took into account several differences between Latin and Greek. He wrote his own opposing views on series of controversies witnessed among Greek scholars on Greek language between the Analogists and Anomalists. His views were detailed and elaborate. Citing Latin examples of regularities and irregularities, he concluded that both principles must be recognized and accepted in analyzing human language.

12.1.2.2 Priscan

Another scholar who contributed in no small measure to the study of Latin is Priscan. His work was in favour of one of the two schools of thought which had generated controversies among the Greek and Roman scholars. Priscan pitched his tent with the analogists. Thus he could be said to be a disciple of the Alexandrian school of thought. He used the principle of analogy to work on regular inflexions of the inflected words. His work on Latin consisted of eighteen books. Priscan's work was intended as teaching grammar. It was used as such through the Middle Ages and as late as the seventeen century AD. Thus he was more than a mere writer of books on Latin, he actually taught Latin grammar in Constantinople in the second half of the fifth century AD. He drew much of his knowledge from his predecessors. His aim was to transfer the grammatical system of Thrax's work and Apollo's writing to Latin. Indeed he admired Greek linguistic scholarship so much that he acknowledged scholars on Greek in his introductory paragraphs and throughout his grammar.

His work ranges from phonetics to morphology and syntax. He defined syllable as 'the smallest parts of articulate speech of which the properties are the name of the letters, its written shape and its phonetic value'. He also considered a word as the minimum unit of the sentence structure. A sentence as far as Priscan is

concerned is the expression of a complete thought. He has to his credit a book titled *Institutiones Grammaticae*. This book formed the basis of Medieval Latin grammar and the foundation of the medieval linguistic philosophy.

12.2 History of Linguistics in India

India also took an active part in linguistic studies. A kind of grammatical analysis which got its own influence on the growth as well as the development of modern linguistics sprang up in India at about the same time Greek and Latin were being worked upon.

Panini, a famous grammarian on Sanskrit was said to have quoted a large number of predecessors in his work. He himself must have lived around fourth century BC.

The kind of grammar that developed in India was styled the Hindu or Indian tradition. The Indian tradition stood out clearly from the Greek and Latin tradition. There were about twelve different schools of grammatical theory in India at this period; a tremendous achievement not surpassed by either the Greek or Roman grammarians. A lot of distinctive grammatical works were written and preserved. The noticeable differences between India and Greco-Roman traditions notwithstanding, there are still some similarities. For example, the kind of controversy about natural or conventional status of language witnessed among scholars in Greek and Latin was evident in Hindu. Similarly, just as the Alexandrian scholars in Greece produced glossaries and commentaries in Greek, so the Indian grammarians compiled on the sacred Hindu texts. Lastly, while Plato was able to make distinction between subject and predicate in Greek, Indian grammarians were able to show distinction between nouns and verbs. However, Indian linguistic study was said to be superior to Western tradition in the areas of phonetics and word structure. The Indian classification of speech sounds was more detailed and more accurate than anything achieved in Europe before late 19th century.

Panini was known for his indepth work on Sanskrit. According to Robins (1967) and Otto Jespersen (1922), his work on Sanskrit on the structure of words was superior to any grammar of any language before him. Robins described his grammar as exhaustive, economical and consistent. The main part of the work has about four thousand rules which are ordered in sequence (Lyons 1968:19). By the middle of the 19th century, the Western scholars had discovered the existence of Sanskrit. This discovery actually led to the development of philology. For details, see Jespersen (1922:32-33).

12.3 Medieval Period

The thirteenth century AD began the Medieval period which was also referred to as the Middle Ages in the history of mankind. It was the period of the European history between the breakdown of the Roman Empire as a unitary area of civilization and administration and the sequence of events and cultural changes known as the Renaissance.

A dominant feature of this period in Europe was the important place occupied by Latin in the educational system and Christian religion. During the period under review, all personal advancement 'both secular and clerical' depended upon a sound knowledge of Latin. The reason was that Latin had not only become the language of religion but also the universal language of diplomacy, scholarship and culture. The status enjoyed by the Roman Church in 'Christianized Europe' and by Latin its official language gave it equally a desire to be taught in schools. As a foreign language, language materials had to be prepared to assist students in learning Latin. However, each country that made use of it had to develop its own pronunciation. The series of advanced studies on Latin later developed to what we call *traditional* or *classical grammar* today.

The approach to language study did not differ from what it was before. The philosophers who championed this course decided to derive the categories of grammar from the categories of logic,

epistemology and metaphysics. The grammarians of this time attached great importance to meaning. This is why they are often referred to collectively as *modistae*. In fact so many works were produced with the title *The mode of Signifying*. They believe that the scientific description of any language should be able to relate the 'word' which is the 'sign' to the human intellect and the 'thing' it represented or 'signified'. According to the Modistae, this is a universal phenomenon. Thus, expressing their view, Roger Bacon (1214-1294) says: Grammar is substantially the same in all languages, even though it may vary accidentally. This was also corroborated by an anonymous scholar: 'who-ever knows what grammar is in one language also knows it in another so far as its substance is concerned. If he cannot however speak it, this is because of the difference of words and their formation which is accidental to grammar' (Lyons 1968:15-16). In essence, they are of the opinion that all languages have words for the same concepts and all languages are likely to manifest the same parts of speech¹.

Apart from Latin, linguistic description of other languages came up during the medieval period. The various linguistic works brought about increase in literacy, popular literature and educational standards. Such linguistic works include Irish and Welsh grammars.

12.4 The Renaissance and After

This was a period between the 14th and 17th centuries AD. Renaissance therefore means the period in Europe when the art, literature and ideas of ancient Greece were rediscovered and widely studied. Indeed it is generation of 'born again' of activities in many things. We mean it was the time when the ancient learning of Greek-Roman classical world was revisited consequent upon which a 'new world' was discovered. In the field of language

study, the scope of linguistics was broadened and its impact felt in Europe.

Languages other than Greek and Latin were systematically studied and new lines of linguistic thought made their appearance in Europe. This is not to say that everything about Greek and Latin had been forgotten. By contrast, the study of both languages continued. The only difference is that the two languages no longer represent the basis of linguistic study as a whole. What follows is the highlights of the development in European languages such as French, Italian, etc. and non-European languages such as Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew, Indian etc.

12.4.1 French and other European Languages'

The Renaissance period also had to its credit the publication of the first sets of grammars of European languages such as Italian, Spanish, French, Polish, etc. The Bourgeois who belonged to the middle class helped to spread literacy and encouraged the study of modern foreign languages through their printing business.

In the seventeenth century, the ideals of *speculative grammar* were revived in France by the teachers of Port Royal. In 1660, a book titled *Grammaire generale et raisonnee* was published. The aim was to show that the structure of language is a product of reason. Not only this, they also showed that the different languages of men are but varieties of a more general logical and relational system. The task before the grammarians of the time was to describe 'good usage' from all causes or forms of corruption, such as the invasion of the vocabulary by loan words, the introduction of technical term, and slangs which are brought about to satisfy the needs of trade and industry among others. The rules of grammar are seen as being derived from the natural tendencies of the mind rather than something arbitrary. Scholars especially those in Port Royal made many proposals for language universals.

¹ In a way, this foreshadows Universal Grammar and its tenets. See Yusuf (1997, 1998) See also Greenberg (1966)

12.4.2 Chinese

During the period under review, religion contributed immensely to the study of linguistics. In China, for example, the missionary work produced a large quantity of the linguistic materials needed for religious use. A lot of works were also carried out on the phonology and syntax of Chinese. A Chinese dictionary was produced too. Trigault was noted for his comparative study of Chinese language and those of Western Europe.

12.4.3 Arabic and Hebrew

Apart from Chinese, the study in Arabic and Hebrew languages came to the limelight in the Renaissance period. Hebrew, especially, was given great attention because of its significance in Christianity at that time. The Arabic scholars in the field of linguistics worked extensively on Arabic. They were noted for the setting out of organs of speech and the mechanism of producing speech sounds. Sibawaih, an Arabic scholar from Persia wrote a book titled *Al Kitab*, describing the grammatical structure and the teaching of the Arabic language.

The study of Arabic and Hebrew served as an eye opener to the too much attention that scholars gave to the imposition of Greek and Latin scholars to linguistics.

Notable grammarians of the Renaissance time include Pierre, Ramec, Trigault, Galileo, Copernicus and Kelper. There were two schools of thought whose immense contribution to the field of philosophy influenced linguistic scholarship. These were the *Empiricism and Rationalism*. The Empiricists believed that all human knowledge is derived externally from sense impression and the operation of the mind upon them in abstraction and generalization. The Rationalists on the other hand seek for the certainty of knowledge not in the impression of the senses but in the irrefutable truths of human reason. The views held by each school had serious effects on the treatment of linguistic questions.

At the tail end of the 18th century, the first statement on the historical relationship between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin was made. This claim ushered in the science of comparative philology, which formed the major preoccupation of the 19th century linguistic study.

12.5 Linguistics in the late 18th and early 19th centuries

The late 18th century and early 19th century were regarded as the eve of modern age. Significant events of the time included politics, economy and education. Countries in Europe (Germany, Italy among others) gained their independence. Economically the establishment and development of industries flourished. This displaced the agricultural life that had hitherto dominated Europe for ages. Education-wise, it was a period of academic improvement. This in turn aided the development of linguistic studies. Students of linguistics at the time had access to works of earlier scholars such as Grim, Whitney and Max Muller.

The period further strengthened works on historical and comparative linguistics. According to Sir William Jones of East India, there were similarities between Greek, Latin and Sanskrit than could be regarded as chance, concluding that a thorough survey would reveal that these languages may have come from a common source now extinct. This view engendered rigorous work on Sanskrit, producing two results; (a) a comparison of Sanskrit with European languages started off later systematic comparative linguistics and (b) there was an awareness of a linguistic scholarship that was to influence Europe tremendously.

General linguistic theory was debated by Indian scholars on issues like the nature of the word and sentence meaning. These scholars had Naturalistic bent. The debate investigated whether words primarily denoted particulars, classes or abstract universals. On the sentence, they were unanimous on the fact that the sentence

was not an amalgamation of the words so strung together. Consider the sentences below:

1. The man died
2. The man kicked the bucket

in which *died* and *kicked the bucket* mean the same thing. If citation meaning of words is strictly followed it will be impossible to get to the intended meaning in the second sentence. In this vein, a sentence is seen as a semantic entity.

The grammarians of this period saw phonetics as a branch of linguistics that links grammar to utterance. The phonetic description was organized under these three headings: (a), processes involved in speech production, (b), the segments so produced and (c), how the speech sounds are put together in phonological structures.

On their own part, Indian linguists identified four parts of speech: *Noun, Verb, Preposition* and *Particle*. A theory aimed at identifying grammatical and sensible utterances was developed concerning sentence structure. Consider:

1. She burns it with fire
2. She burns it with water

While both sentences are grammatical only the first makes sense.

The era also witnessed the coming together of philosophers from different countries and with diverse backgrounds. The aim was to carry out an extensive study of the Indo-European languages in an attempt to find the origin of language. German scholars came to the limelight as theories of language were developed mostly by German linguists or scholars from other countries but trained in Germany.

Notable linguists and their contribution to linguistics included the following:

- (a) Rasmus Rask (1787-1832) and Jacob Grimm (1785-1863). Both of them were the architect of the comparative and historical study of the Indo-European language family.
- (b) Schlegel, F. was well known for his work titled *On the language and the learning of the Indians*
- (c) Bopp (1791-1867)'s *On the conjugation system of Sanskrit in comparison with that of Greek, Latin Persian and German* made him a force within the field of linguistics.
- (d) Benfey was a German scholar. He had to his credit a work titled *The history of linguistics and oriental philology in Germany*.
- (e) Jacob Grimm (1822) was famous for his law of sound shift, popularly known as 'Grimm's Law'.
- (f) William von Humboldt devised a theory of language which lays emphasis on creative linguistic ability inherent in every speaker's brain or mind. He was also to be remembered for his view on language universality. According to him though capacity for language is universal, yet, each language has a peculiar property of the group who speak it.
- (g) A. Schleicher (1821-1868) wrote many books on historical linguistics and linguistic theory. One of his books is *Compendium of the comparative grammar of the Indo-Germanic languages*.

12.6 The Nigerian Scene

We may not have the kind of momentous linguistic activities as found in Europe or India in Nigeria, there are respectable efforts here too. For one thing, no linguistic research in Nigeria predates the late 18th century. Further, such works were scanty for reasons that Nigeria is a multilingual setting with very low level of literacy.

The earliest significant efforts started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries pioneered by Christian missionary works.

There are estimated four hundred languages in Nigeria, languages spoken over centuries but remaining largely unwritten. The earliest efforts were concerned with collection of word lists with no serious grammatical analyses. For example, the first language samples were collected by Portuguese visitors to the coast by about 1600, but the first relatively detailed study of some African languages was published in 1812. In this work, vocabularies for six Nigerian languages were printed. The languages are Hausa, Kanuri, Fula, Ibo, Ijaw and Ibibio. The works revealed that very little was known about the languages in question as most were referred to under misleading or incorrect names.

From the 1840's, important work on Efik was carried out by the Scottish Presbyterian Mission at Calabar. Later in the century, useful materials on Yorùbá and Igbo were prepared by the Methodist and Roman Catholic Missions. One thing of note is that most of the linguistic work on Nigerian languages referred to here was done outside Nigeria and by foreign linguists.

Between 1824-1844, efforts to put the Yorùbá language into writing started in Sierra Leone. Clapperton's work started after his visit to the Yorùbáland. The earliest collection of Yorùbá words dated back to 1819's Bowdich work. Hannah Kilham and Raban followed suit. Late Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a native speaker began his scholastic work on Nigerian languages, Yorùbá inclusive. He started with the translation of the New Testament into Yorùbá. Other early scholars on Yorùbá scholars included Baudin who wrote a book titled: *Essai de grammaire Yorùbá* in 1884, Westermann who wrote Yorùbá Texts and Akintemi's Dictionary of the Yorùbá Language. Reverend Wood would also be remembered for his book *Notes on the construction of the Yorùbá language*.

Schon's 1844's work on Hausa which was submitted to Professor Samuel Lee of Cambridge was the first known work on

that language. The story on the Igbo language was not different from what we have on other Nigerian languages during this period: very scanty accounts.

12.7 History of Linguistics in the 20th Century

The twentieth century can be described as a revolutionary period in the development of linguistics the world over. Linguistic theories were pursued rigorously in Europe and America and tested on languages of the world.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss scholar was referred to as the father of modern linguistics. He had series of lectures which his students compiled to a book titled *Cours de linguistique generale*, posthumously. Notable scholars during this period in Britain included Henry Sweet and Firth, both notable phoneticians and philologists. Firth's book *A synopsis of linguistic theory, 1930-1935* was regarded as a summary of the theories of the London school of linguistics of the time.

In the first three decades of the 20th century, American linguists came in more forcefully into the scene. In the 1930s, Bloomfield, Bloch, Fries, Wells, Sapir, Harris, Hockett, Nida and Boas developed a new approach to linguistics known as *structuralism*. This revolutionized and displaced the age-long traditional grammar.

By 1957, 'a radically different approach became widely available with the publication of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*' (Tomori 1977:9). From this time Chomsky has remained a dominant figure in the linguistic field, his theory engendering modifications and revisions like the Standard Theory, Generative Semantics². This healthy rivalry gave birth to Chomsky's (1970) Extended Standard Theory (EST), a modification on the 1965 Standard Theory.

² This was occasioned by George Lakoff's (a student of Chomsky's) thesis of 1965 which challenged Chomsky's postulations. George Lakoff had able support from James Macaulley, Paul Postal, Jeff Gruber and Robin Lakoff.

Outside America, there were developments in the field. Halliday, a student of Firth was also developing a theory known as the Systemic Grammar which was later to metamorphose into Functional Grammar. Halliday's students, Ayo Bamgbose and Bisi Afolayan were fanning the flame of this theory in Nigeria. While Awobuluyi who imbibed the American tradition claimed he was using a functional approach in his *Essentials of Yorùbá Grammar* (1978), his approach was radically opposed to the Hallidayan adherence. Today, on the Nigerian scene, the pendulum has swung back to the American school; scholars follow the Chomskian trend as in the Government and Binding Theory (1981) and the Minimalist Program (1995). Chomsky remains a pacesetter.

Most of the approaches so far considered cut across all branches of theoretical linguistics -- phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Other theories, sometimes offshoots of the Chomskian tradition, are available. These include the Autosegmental theory for phonology (Goldsmith 1976) and Lexical Phonology (Kiparsky 1982).

While this progressive and impressive progress is on in Europe and America the theories are rigorously studied in Africa. Nigerian scholars have started to attract world attention too. Mignod (1914) produced a grammar of Hausa. Between 1934 and 1949 Abraham carried out series of work on Hausa which included phonetics and tones, principles of Hausa and a dictionary of the Hausa language. He also wrote a book on the principles of the Idoma language in 1935.

The establishment of a premier university in Ibadan in 1948 and the subsequent introduction of the department of linguistics in that University and some others that came up later ushered in a new horizon in the study of linguistics. Scholars and students now carried extensive studies on many Nigerian languages. Contemporary reknown scholars on Nigerian Languages include Ayò Bamgbose, Oladele Awobuluyi, Kay Williamson, William Welmers, William Arnot, William Parsons, Ben Elugbe, Russel

Schuh, William Laben, Abba Rufai, Olasope Oyelaran and Bisi Afolayan. Others are Yiwola Awoyale, Ope Yusuf, Vicki Carstens, Graham Finnis, Phil Jaggar, Nolue Emenanjo Akinbiyi Akinlabi, Victor Manfredi, Rosemary Déchaine and a host of young researchers now making waves in both the theoretical and applied fields. There seems to be a standard pivot for most research workers: *The Ibadan 400 words List*.

The rigors of the research on Nigerian languages has bred various journals and linguistic societies on local languages and theoretical issues. The principal national body on language research is the *Linguistic Association of Nigeria* with its organ as *Journal of Nigerian Languages* (JOLAN) (a yearly publication). Proceeds from this and other journals command international respect having been conducted in standard theories.

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