



Tikrit University

College of Education

English Department

Class: 3rd

Linguistics

**Lecture Title: The History of Linguistics: Greek- Twentieth
Century**

Submitted by:

Asst. Lecturer Muna E. Abdullah

Linguistics is the scientific study of language, involving analysis of language form, language meaning, and language in context.

Language use was first systematically documented in Mesopotamia, with extant lexical lists of the 3rd to the 2nd Millenia BCE, and phonetical vocabularies of foreign languages. Later, Sanskrit would be systematically analyzed, and its rules described, in the Indus Valley. Beginning around the 4th century BCE, also developed its own grammatical tradition. Aristotle laid the foundation of Western linguistics as part of the study of rhetoric.

Modern approaches began to develop in the 18th century, eventually being regarded in the 19th century as belonging to the disciplines of psychology or biology, with such views establishing the foundation of mainstream Anglo-American linguistics, although in England philological approaches such as that of Henry Sweet tended to predominate. This was contested in the early 20th century by Ferdinand de Saussure, who established linguistics as an autonomous discipline within social sciences. Following Saussure's concept, general linguistics consists of the study of language as a semiotic system, which includes the subfields of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Each of these subfields can be approached either synchronically or diachronically.

Greek

The Greeks developed an alphabet using symbols from the Phoenicians, adding signs for vowels and for extra consonants appropriate to their idiom. In the Phoenicians and in earlier Greek writing systems, graphemes indicated

syllables that are sound combinations of a consonant and a vowel. The addition of vowels by the Greeks was a major breakthrough as it facilitated the writing of Greek by representing both vowels and consonants with distinct graphemes. As a result of the introduction of writing, poetry such as the Homeric poems became written and several editions were created and commented on, forming the basis of philology and criticism.

Along with written speech, the Greeks commenced studying grammatical and philosophical issues. A philosophical discussion about the nature and origins of language can be found as early as the works of Plato. A subject of concern was whether language was man-made, a social artifact, or supernatural in origin. **Plato** in his *Cratylus* presents the naturalistic view that word meanings emerge from a natural process, independent of the language user. His arguments are partly based on examples of compounding, where the meaning of the whole is usually related to the constituents, although by the end he admits a small role for convention. The sophists and Socrates introduced dialectics as a new text genre. The Platonic dialogs contain definitions of the meters of the poems and tragedy, the form and the structure of those texts.

Aristotle supports the conventional origins of meaning. He defined the logic of speech and of the argument. Furthermore, Aristotle's works on rhetoric and poetics became of the utmost importance for the understanding of tragedy, poetry, public discussions etc. as text genres. Aristotle's work on logic interrelates with his special interest in language, and his work on this area was fundamentally important for the development of the study of language (*logos* in Greek means both "language" and "logic reasoning"). In *Categories*, Aristotle defines what is meant by "synonymous" or univocal words, what is meant by "homonymous" or equivocal words, and what is meant by "paronymous" or denominative words. He divides forms of speech as being:

- Either simple, without composition or structure, such as "man," "horse," "fights," etc.
- Or having composition and structure, such as "a man fights," "the horse runs," etc.

Romans

The Romans copied the Greeks exactly in all aspects of linguistics. Verro was called the most learned man of his time. He wrote twenty five volume works on the Latin language under the heading Etymology, morphology and syntax.

The European Middle Ages

It is possible that developments in grammar during the Middle Ages constitute one of the most misunderstood areas of the field of linguistics. It is difficult to relate this period coherently to other periods and to modern concerns because surprisingly little is accessible and certain, let alone analyzed with sophistication. By the mid-20th century the majority of the known grammatical treatises had not yet been made available in full to modern scholarship, so not even their true extent could be classified with confidence. These works must be analyzed and studied in the light of medieval learning, especially the learning of the schools of philosophy then current, in order to understand their true value and place.

The field of linguistics has almost completely neglected the achievements of this period. Students of grammar have tended to see as high points in their field the achievements of the Greeks, the Renaissance growth and “rediscovery” of learning (which led directly to modern school traditions), the contemporary flowering of theoretical study (people usually find their own age important and fascinating),

and, since the mid-20th century, the astonishing monument of Panini. Many linguists have found uncongenial the combination of medieval Latin learning and premodern philosophy. Yet medieval scholars might reasonably be expected to have bequeathed to modern scholarship the fruits of more than ordinarily refined perceptions of a certain order. These scholars used, wrote in, and studied Latin, a language that, though not their native tongue, was one in which they were very much at home; such scholars in groups must often have represented a highly varied linguistic background.

Some of the medieval treatises continue the tradition of grammars of late antiquity; so there are versions based on Donatus and Priscian, often with less incorporation of the classical poets and writers. Another genre of writing involves simultaneous consideration of grammatical distinctions and scholastic logic; modern linguists are probably inadequately trained to deal with these writings.