|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Tlemcen University  Faculty of Letters and Languages  Department of English  LMD1 Linguistics Course  Teaching Unit : Fundamental Level : L1 Time Allotted: 1h.30  Instructor: ABDAT Yassamina e-mail ab2020yass@gmail.com |
| General Course Objectives  Aims and Objectives:  This is an opening introductory course in the discipline of Linguistics. Learning outcomes described below are planned in a way that contributes to meeting degree-level expectations in the following areas: depth and breadth of knowledge and mastery of the linguistic concepts and terminologies, knowledge of methodologies, that should be adequately adopted for any research application of knowledge, and communication skills.  Students are expected to be able to do the following upon successful completion of the course.   * Be exposed to linguistics as a module and as a scientific-based discipline and learn basic terms and concepts and methods used by linguists in the scientific study of human language. * Have a clear idea and be acquainted with the criteria needed for any linguistic research. * Become familiar with how linguists approach and analyze language in primary fields of linguistic analysis such as morphology, syntax, semantics phonetics, and phonology and language in society, and writing. * Give students a prolific opportunity to understand the extent to which human language is different from other ways of communication in terms of language nature, and structure.   Expected Outcomes:  By the end of this lecture, the students are expected to be able to   * Acquire an in-depth understanding of linguistics and understand the complexity of language as a communicative system that is shaped by cognitive, biological, cultural, and social factors. * Gain sufficient vocabulary knowledge and theoretical terms related to this field of study which will enable them to convert the theoretical knowledge into practice. | |

**Lesson 1: WHAT IS LINGUISTICS?**

1. **Introduction**

As a scientific- based discipline, the term Linguistics is one of those subjects that not many people have heard of, so you might well be wondering exactly what it is. The simplest definition of Linguistics is that it’s the science of language. In spite of its simplicity, this definition contains some significant terms that should necessarily be clarified. Initially, the term science does not necessarily mean you need a lab coat and safety goggles to do linguistics. Instead, what it means is that the way we ask questions to learn about language uses a scientific approach.

**Linguistics Defined**

The word linguistics has been derived from Latin word lingua (tongue) and istics (knowledge and science). It is study not only of one particular language but of human languages in general.

This term can be defined as the scientific analysis of any human language. It is based on a systematic investigation of a body of data “human speech” within general theory of language structure. In other terms, it is seen as a science in the sense that it scientifically studies the rules, systems and principles of human languages. According to Lyons (1981:16)

‘Linguistics is commonly defined as a science of language. The word ‘science’ is crucial here. we may say that the scientific description is one that is carried out systematically on the basis of objectively verifiable observations and within the framework of some general theory appropriate to the data’.

In the same line of thought, Robins (1985), asserts that linguistics  
“is concerned with human language as a universal and recognizable part of the human behaviour and of the human faculties perhaps one of the most essential to human life as we know it, and one of the most far reaching of human capabilities in relation to the whole span of mankind’s achievements.

The major tenet of linguistics work on specific languages, yet, its primary goal is to understand the nature of language in general. Likewise, any other disciplines, it strives to help people increase their knowledge and understanding of the world. Since language is universal and fundamental to all human interactions, the knowledge attained in linguistics has many practical applications.  Linguists, with some training in other appropriate disciplines, are thus prepared to seek answers to questions such asm

* What distinguishes human language from other animal communication systems?
* What features are common to all human languages?
* How are the modes of linguistic communication (speech, writing, sign language) related to each other?

**The Scientific Characteristics of a Linguistic Approach**

Since the term science is a key concept, it is indeed of paramount importance to provide at least a definition- based before clarifying its significance in the present course. Thus, the concept science implies:

***“The systematic study of humans and their environment based on the deductions and inferences which can be made, and the general laws which can be formulated, from reproducible observations and measurements of events and parameters within the universe”***

***(Commonwealth, 2010***)

Indisputably, it seems to be generally agreed outside linguistics that for any enterprise to qualify as a scientific, in the usual sense, it should display at least three major characteristics which are: empiricism, exactness and objectivity.

* **Empiricism:** You must have already heard the quote: “I will not believe it unless I see it”. This came from the ancient empiricists, a fundamental understanding that powered the emergence of medieval science during the renaissance period and laid the foundation of modern science, as we know it today. The word itself has its roots in Greek. It is derived from the Greek word empeirikos which means “experienced”.

In today’s world, the word empirical refers to collection of data using evidence that is collected through observation or experience or by using calibrated scientific instruments. All of the above origins have one thing in common which is dependence of observation and experiments to collect data and test them to come up with conclusions

Simply, put, as an important and essential criterion, empiricism can be explained by the fact that any linguistic research should rely on experiment and observation i.e. , the view that all concepts originate in experience, that all concepts are about or applicable to things that can be experienced, or that all rationally acceptable beliefs or propositions are justifiable or knowable only through experience.

* **Exactness:** Any linguistic theory should be correct in every detail and valid in terms of time and place.
* **Objectivity:** The rule states and not thinks; that is objectivity means judgement based on observable phenomena and uninfluenced by emotions or personal prejudices.  In other words, objectivity is a cardinal feature of scientificness. The questions they ask, the conclusion they reach and the evidence they cite must be capable of being publically observed and tested. The usual word which attempts to summarize this point is empirical. An empirical test is one in which the examination of phenomena takes place under controlled, experimental conditions, the result being available to direct observation and judgement, so that if the experiment were replicated, the same results and the same popular judgements would be obtained. Putting this another way, the results are verifiable. (Crystal.1985: 78-99).

In this line of thought,

***‘Scientific objectivity is a property of various aspects of science. It expresses the idea that scientific claims, methods, results—and scientists themselves—are not, or should not be, influenced by particular perspectives, value judgments, community bias or personal interests, to name a few relevant factors. Objectivity is often considered to be an ideal for scientific inquiry, a good reason for valuing scientific knowledge, and the basis of the authority of science in society’.***

***Reiss, J. & Sprenger, J (2020)***

According to P.M. Cook: ***‘Research is an honest, exhaustive, intelligent searching for fact and their meanings or implications with reference to a given problem. The product of findings of a given piece of research should be an authentic, verifiable, and contribution to knowledge in the field studies.***

In this respect, he has emphasised the following characteristics of research in his description: − It is an honest and exhaustive process. − The facts are studied with understanding. − The facts are discovered in the light of a problem. Research is problem- centred. − The findings are valid and verifiable. − Research work should contribute new knowledge in that field (Cited in Singh, 2006).

**Lecture Summary**

All in all, linguistics as a science strives to study human language, namely its spoken form obeying the requirements o a scientific method which involves empiricism, exactness and objectivity. Its main purpose is to define language and provide a description of its characteristics and functions. Moreover, this discipline attempts to give information about the history of language and explain the differences between languages.

Therefore, the role of the linguist is to provide theories and ideas about language in order to help people to understand this human phenomenon and try to draw some conclusions about the nature of language.To better understand the linguistic research as well as its required criteria for any investigation, one may consider the following figure:



Figure 1. Empirical research methodology cycle

(Retrieved from https://www.questionpro.com/blog/empirical-research)

This empirical cycle captures the process of coming up with hypothesis about how certain subjects work or behave and then testing these hypotheses against empirical data in a systematic and rigorous approach following the deductive approach

The initial phase called, Observation in which the investigator proposes a hypothesis and strives in the coming step to gather the required empirical data using observation.

* **Induction:** Inductive reasoning is then carried out to form a general conclusion from the data gathered through discrete observation.
* **Deduction:** This phase helps the researcher to deduce a conclusion out of his experiment. This has to be based on logic and rationality to come up with specific unbiased results.
* **Testing:** This phase involves the researcher to return to empirical methods to put his hypothesis to the test.
* **Evaluation:** This phase is generally forgotten by most but is an important one to keep gaining knowledge. During this phase the researcher puts forth the data he has collected, the support argument and his conclusion.

**Required Resources**

* Lyons, J. (1968). Linguistics: The Scientific Study of Language. In Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics (pp.1-52). Cambridge University Press
* Trask, Roberts Lawrence. Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics. London: Routledge, 1999.
* Singh, Y. K. (2006). Fundamental of Research Methodology and Statistics. New Delhi: New international (P) Limited, Publishers.
* Cook, G. (2003). Applied linguistics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Selected Readings**

“Linguistics is the study of language. Knowledge of linguistics, however, is different from knowledge of a language. Just as a person is able to drive a car without understanding the inner workings of the engine, so, too, can a speaker use a language without any conscious knowledge of its internal structure. Conversely, a linguist can know and understand the internal structure of a language without actually speaking it”

(ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics Washington DC 1992).

“Linguistics may be defined as the scientific study of language. This definition is hardly sufficient to give the reader any positive indication of the fundamental principles of the subject. It may be made a little more revealing by drawing in greater detail the implications contained in the qualification ‘scientific’. For the moment, it will be enough to say that by the scientific study of language is meant its investigation by means of controlled and empirically verifiable observations and with reference to some general theory of language-structure”.

(Lyons, 1968:1)

“A linguist, then, is not an individual who speaks more than one language, more accurately called "polyglot" or "bilingual" or "multilingual." Rather, a linguist is concerned with language as a human phenomenon. Linguists study grammar, the social and psychological aspects of language use, and the relationships among languages, both historical and present-day. The field of linguistics, like any complex field, includes several major divisions”.

CAL Online Resources: Digests ( December,1992)

“The most important claim linguists make is that their study of language is scientific. Although both scientists disagree to some extent concerning the nature of their respective activities, there does seem to be general agreement about some requirements for a scientific method. These include the use of controlled experiment in which the variable factors involved have been precisely identified in an objective way, as well as the requirement that the methods used to be made public so that the results of an experiment can be verified. Thus, a scientific study should be empirical, exact and therefore objective”

“Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Linguists do work on specific languages, but their primary goal is to understand the nature of Language in general. Linguistics is primarily concerned with the nature of language and communication. There are broadly three aspects to the study, including language form, language meaning, and language use in discursive and communicative contexts..... Linguistics deals with the study of particular languages and the search for general properties common to all languages or large groups of languages.

EvdokiaKaravas (2014:3-4)