Module: Linguistics

Level: L1- FILA

Time Allotted: 90 min

Instructor: Dr Fatma KHERBACHE

E-mail: socioling70@gmail.com

Lecture 3 **:** Modern Linguistics (ML)

**1. Modern Linguistics (ML)**

Linguistics or modern linguistics refers to the scientific study of language and its structure. This encompasses investigating elements such as grammar, syntax, and phonetics. Furthermore, modern linguistics views language as a structured system. it adopts a descriptive approach by observing how language operates rather than prescribing how its usage. Moreover, it considers the spoken form as fundamental. Linguists view human language as a dynamic phenomenon that changes over time. Hence, linguistics considers language change as a natural process. Languages that do not change are said to be dead languages. E.g. Latin.

Modern linguistics emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the shift of focus from historical concerns of changes in languages over time to the idea that a language can be viewed as a self-contained and structured system situated at a particular point in time. This forms the basis for structuralist linguistics that developed in the post-First World War period. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913) is widely acknowledged as the key figure in this refocusing of interest, and as the founding father of modern linguistics as he set up a comprehensive theoretical framework for the description of language (descriptive linguistics).

The following table exposes some of the differences between modern linguistics and traditional grammar.

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| **Traditional Grammar vs. Modern Linguistics** | | |
|  | **Traditional Grammar** | **Modern Linguistics** |
| **Definition** | Collection of prescriptive rules and concepts about the structure of language | Scientific study of language and its structure including the study of grammar, syntax and phonetics |
| **Origin** | Origins can be traced back to the 15 th century. | Derived from traditional grammar |
| **Type** | Prescriptive | Descriptive |
| **Focus** | Written form | Speech |
| **Standards** | Force language into a Latin-based framework | Does not force one language into the framework of another |

