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|  | 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:  Delivering this lecture consists in striving to:   * 1. Clarify the extent to which Traditional Grammar is different from Modern Linguistics in terms of Language study, analysis and main principles. * 1. State the features of traditional Grammar briefly. * 2. Identify the different concepts of Modern linguistics concisely. * 3. Differentiate between the features of traditional grammar and modern linguistics correctly*.* * Have an idea about the main contribution of Traditional grammar. | |



Course Two: Linguistics vs Traditional Grammar: An Overview of The Similarities and Key Differences

# Introduction

Language changes from generation to generation, at all levels of sound and meaning. Thus, grammar as a method of analysing these changes altered accordingly. Now we have two branches: the traditional Grammar and modern linguistics. It should be noted that before the 19th century, linguistics as a scientific discipline was called philology because it was based on philosophical assumptions concerning the grammar of language. By the beginning of the 19th century, researchers started thinking about the use of a scientific approach for the study of language. Thus, the term linguistics was used to refer to any form of investigation about the different elements of language including grammar. Yet, before clarifying and analysing the sameness and dissimilarities between traditional grammar and modern linguistics in terms of their principles and assumptions, it might seem compulsory to provide at first a thorough explanation about each branch.

# The Conception of Traditional Language Studies

Traditional Grammatical Studies refer back to all the scholarly works that studied the nature of language study before the emergence of modern linguistics (1916). The history of such studies is divided into several periods: classical grammar (Latin and Greek), medieval grammar (the Middle Ages), pedagogical grammar (early English grammar), and comparative historical philology. Each of these periods is characterized by widely held assumptions about language and its analysis.

## Classical Grammar

Classical Grammar started with the investigations in the nature of language carried out by the Greek grammarians in the fifth century B.C. Platon (429- 347) distinguished between nouns and verbs and established the problematic of etymology. Aristotle (322- 384) classified conjunctions and defined verbs in term of tense. However, the main grammarians were Alexandrian and included Dionysius Thrax (170- 190) B.C. Thrax was the first to elaborate a full handbook of grammar defining it as “the technical knowledge of the language generally employed by poets and writers.” He classified the Greek words into eight parts of speech (nouns, verbs, articles, adverbs, conjunctions, propositions, participles and pronouns). The other Alexandrian grammarians established case, gender, number, tense, voice and mood. Likewise, the Latin grammarians, notably, Aelius Donatius (4th century A.D) and Priscian (5th century A.D) elaborated grammar books for beginners and learners.

Basically, all these grammarians considered language as writing. Speech, for them, was an imperfect copy of writing. The reason behind this view is the prevalence of sacred texts Greek and Latin. Such languages were considered as logical and richer than the other so-called primitive languages. That is why they were the only written languages worthy of study at that time. As a result, grammar was completely prescriptive. That is to say, grammarians prescribed the rules and norms of correct usage. Prescriptive rules dictated precisely how the writers and speakers ought to write and speak. Any kind of deviation was dismissed as a corruption of the pure, prestigious texts.

## Medieval Grammar

The Middle Ages perpetuated the dominance of Latin as the languages of all theological and scholarly works. The most important contribution was made by the 17th century grammarians of Port-Royal in France. They developed what is called GrammaireGenéral et Raisonée (1660), establishing the foundation for a philosophical grammar. The main thinkers were Claude Lancelet (1615- 95) and Antoine Arnauld (1612- 94). These thinkers tried to study the common principles between languages.

Medieval grammar also includes the contributions of the Arab and Muslim grammarians. Their main works consisted in lexicography i.e. reference books and translations. In effect, the first types of dictionary were produced in Arabic. The aim was to teach the classical language and preserve it from deviations.

## Pedagogical Grammar

The eighteenth century British grammarians were essentially pedagogical in nature. They attempted to teach a great number of people how to read and write in the newly standardized language, English, that would be intelligible throughout the new industrialized nation, Britain. In this respect, they established rules and norms based on the Latin model. The most famous grammar book of the 18th century was Joseph Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar (1761). Subsequently, other influential grammars appeared, namely, Robert Lowth’s Short Introduction to English Grammar (1762) and Murray’s English Grammar (1794). Many contemporary school grammars are still based on such works, perpetuating the classical perspective legacy (purity, propriety and order).

## Comparative Philology

Study of the relationships or correspondences between two or more languages and the techniques used to discover whether the languages have a common ancestor. The fundamental technique of comparative linguistics is the comparative method, which aims to compare phonological systems, morphological systems, syntax and the lexicon using this comparative method, linguists have been able to establish the connections among a group of languages. Comparative grammar was the most important branch of linguistics in the 19th century in Europe. Also called comparative philology, the study was originally stimulated by the discovery by Sir William Jones in 1786 that Sanskrit was related to Latin, Greek, and German (i.e., in which he found many similarities between Latin, Greek, and German and suggested the existence of a common original language). Accordingly, he believed that the Sanskrit language:

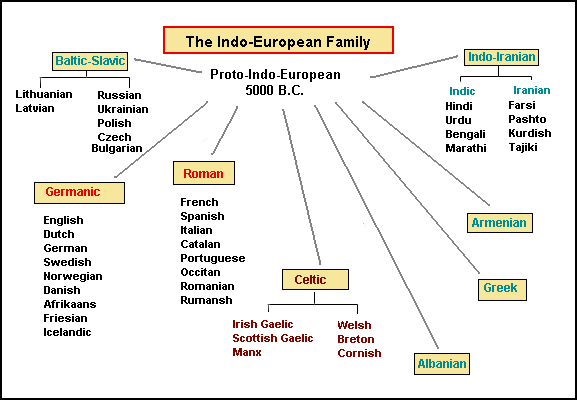
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| ***“The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source.”*** |

This observation gave rise to two main fields of study: comparative and historical. Indeed, the investigation into the similarities, also called cognate forms, between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and other European languages gave birth to the Indo-European family of languages and the establishment of a general theory of language change and relationships known as comparative philology.

According to Robins (1985, p.5); Historical Linguistics is the study of the development in language in the course of time, the ways in which languages change from period to period and of the causes and results of such changes… It must be based on a description of two or more stages in the development of the language being studied; whereas in comparative Linguistics, linguists study language changes, formation and its development of languages.This is not possible without describing the related languages. comes in Descriptive linguistics • When descriptive linguists study two or more languages that exist at a particular time, they study language changes.Thanks to comparative philology, the phenomenon Language family was born.

The term family of languages or linguistic group was coined to show the genetic and philological relationships existing between a group of related languages. Thus, the Indo-European family of languages may be called sister languages. English, German and Dutch are said to be descendant or daughter languages of Germanic. Similarly, French, Spanish and Italian are daughter languages of Latin. Classical Greek and Modern Greek are daughter languages of Greek.

The Indo-European family is divided into several branches or subfamilies. It consists of numerous Indo-Iranian languages, including Sanskrit, Hindi, and Farsi (Persian); Greek; Baltic languages such as Lithuanian and Latvian; Celtic languages such as Breton, Welsh, and Scottish and Irish Gaelic; Romance languages such as French, Spanish, Catalan, and Italian; Germanic languages such as German, English, and Swedish; and Slavic languages such as Polish and Serbian



This family has been the one most studied. It is also the one with the greatest number of surviving ancient documents and the one for which genetic links can be established with absolute certainty.

Here is the list of Indo-European languages presented in their respective subgroups:

| Group | Subgroup | Languages |
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| NOTE: = Extinct language | | |
| Indo-Iranian | Indian | Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Bihari, Gujarati, Punjabi, Oriya, Rajasthani, Nepali, Assamese, Bundeli, Sindhi, Konkani, Pahari, Singhalese, Santali, Gypsy, etc. |
| Iranian | Avestan†, Persian (Farsi/Dari/Tajik), Afghan (Pashtu), Kurdish, Balouchi, Hazara, Aimak, Ossetian, Talyshe, Tat, etc. |
| Greek | | Ancient Greek, modern Greek |
| Italic or Romance languages | | Oscan, Umbrian, Venetic, Messapian,  Raetian (Raetic) |
| Latin (mother language of Romance languages) |
| Italian, French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Galician, Mirandese, Provençal, Sardinian, Romanian, Romansch, Ladino, Friulian, Dalmatian†, Sicilian, etc. |
| Celtic | | Gaulish |
| Breton, Welsh, Cornish |
| Irish, Scots, Manx |
| Germanic | | Gothic |
| Danish, Swedish, Norwegian (Bokmål and Nynorsk), Icelandic, Faroese |
| English, Friesian, German, Dutch, Afrikaans |
| Baltic | | Old Prussian, Lithuanian, Latvian |
| Slavic | | Polish, Czech, Slovak, Sorbian |
| Serbo-Croatian, Slovene, Bulgarian, Macedonian |
| Russian, Belorussian, Ukranian (and Ruthenian) |
| Armenian (isolate) | | Armenian |
| Albanian (isolate) | | Albanian (Tosk and Gheg) |
| Various isolates | | Hittite, Tocharish, Lykian, Lydian, Luwian, Phrygian, Thracian, etc |

The Indo-European Family. Retrieved from

https://www.uottawa.ca/clmc/indo-european-family

# Characteristics of traditional grammar

The origins of traditional grammar can be traced back to15th century B.C., to Aristotle and Plato and Greek. However, the most prominent traditional grammarians began writing in the 18th century, when English developed as a separate language. However, it is important to note that principles of Latin grammar are the main basis of Traditional English grammar. Furthermore, traditional grammar includes prescriptive rules that users should follow, and prescriptive rules of usage users should avoid.  Books of traditional grammar generally contain lists of grammatical terms, definitions of these terms, and advice on using standard grammar, which includes correct punctuation, spelling and diction. Even though linguists consider traditional grammar as an irrational method to study language and grammar, we can still find basic Latin-based concepts of grammar in English textbooks and usage guides.

Simply put, the assumptions that characterize Traditional grammar are listed as follows:

* Language is prescriptive not descriptive; since the classical languages are more correct than every daily speeches, it is essential to prescribe the rules and the norms of correct usage rather than describe what people actually say. In other words, traditional grammars told people how to use a language and henceforth strongly believed that there is not an absolute standard of correctness concerning language use which modern linguists or school teachers should view as their duty to maintain. However, modern linguists insist that value judgments about language should be recognized as such, and should be examined in the light of the facts. Besides, they would prefer to be observers and recorders of facts, but not judges. they therefore believe that whatever occurs in natural speech(hesitation, incomplete utterances, misunderstanding, etc.) should be descriptive in their analysis. ‘Jian& Ming, 2015:289).
* Writing is seen as the primary medium of human expression: In the past, grammarians have overstressed the significance of the written word, partly because of its permanence. It was difficult to cope with fleeting utterances before the invention of sound recording. Conversely, speech was regarded as an imperfect copy of writing. Though it is widely agreed among linguists that speech is a primary medium of expression for several reasons as it existed long long before written system came into being. This belief stems from the previous sacred writing in Latin and Greek
* Language study is selective; Grammar considers Latin and Greek as the most logical, more advanced and richer than the so called primitive languages. As a result, they are the only written languages worthy to be studied.

# Disadvantages of CLASSICAL GRAMMAR

It should be noted that Traditional grammar is inadequate and full of shortcomings that paved the way for so many models of modern grammar. Since it is mainly based on Indo-European classical languages like Latin, Sanskrit, and Greek, etc., it provides a poor model for the grammars of languages that differ from them. These shortcomings can be summarized as follows:

1. It does not, adequately distinguish between all the linguistic levels- phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and descriptive.

2. It is normative and prescriptive rather than explicit and descriptive. i.e. its rules are illogical, it is inconsistent and inadequate as a description of actual language in use. It neglects not only the contemporary uses but also the functional and social varieties of language.

3. Its approach is diachronic (historical) rather than synchronic (contemporary). Fries in his book "The structure of English" (1952) challenges the traditional grammars by calling them "not insightful", "pre-scientific", "prescriptive" and having a "literary bias'". There may be about 200 definitions of the sentence, yet they are not able to differentiate between the dog is barking. the barking dog.

4. Traditional grammar uses meaning as the primary tool of linguistic analysis. Total meaning of a language cannot be analyzed in the present stage of our knowledge. Meaning is a complex entity for the understanding of which a formal description of a language should form the base. Furthermore, it fails to indicate clearly which meaning it is going to treat

5. It gives priority to the written form of language and ignores the priority of spoken form. It does not even cover the whole range of written form and is restricted to specific kinds of writing form, especially the formal styles.

6. It cannot resolve the ambiguity existing in the grammatical forms. Its methods are inaccurate, incomplete and inconsistent, and the descriptions are inexplicit and intuitive.

# Main Contributions of CLASSICAL GRAMMAR

Despite its numerous misconceptions and false assumptions about the patterns underlying language, and the lack of a theoretical systematic analysis, classical grammar has as its record a rich technical vocabulary and sound rules governing correct usage of language. Here are its main highlights:

* The classification of patterns of inflection and the distinction between active and passive voice as well as transitive and intransitive verbs.
* The classification of all Greek words in terms of case, gender, number, tense, voice and mood.
* The classification of words according to gender.
* The classification of words into eight parts of speech: noun, verb, article, pronoun, adverb, preposition, conjunction and participle.

