Lecture 08 :

Part One: The Four Main Linguistic Schools of Thought

There are, of course, numerous schools of thought related to Linguistics. Here are four of the most well-known linguistic schools of thought:

1. Functionalism

This first school of thought focuses on how language is actually used in everyday life. Those who abide by functionalism look at language as just another tool for humans to use, and thus tend to focus on the function language and its different parts have in our lives. The theories of functionalism focus on phonological, semantic, syntactic, as well as the pragmatic functions of language. Functionalism emphasizes the importance of social context, usage, and the communicative function of the grammar, phonology, orthography, and more, of a language.

The Prague School was leading this theory.   The Prague School can be traced back to its first meeting under the leadership of V.Mathesius Mathesiusin in 1926. This school practiced a special style of synchronic linguistics, and its most important contribution to linguistics is that it sees language in terms of function.

The London school on the other hand, was under the leadership of Firth's, theorizing mainly about phonology and semantics, and how language is a means of doing things and making others do things. Halliday was also a pioneer of the London school, introducing Systemic-Functional Grammar, and finally we also mention Malinowski' 's theories.

2. Structuralism

Based on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure of Switzerland, structuralism is an approach to linguistics that focuses on the idea that languages are fixed systems made up of many different units that connect with each other. This school of thought marked a shift from historical linguistic analysis to non-historical analysis. Later on, other linguists would come to see structuralism as rather out-of-date. It worked for phonology and morphology, but the theories it proposes don't make as much sense as the ones proposed by new schools of thought. Saussure was aware of the fact that, in his time, he would not be able to get a good understanding of the human brain, and so left that to future linguists. De Saussure changed the traditional view of language and perceived it as a social fact.

Bloomfield was a leader when it comes to the American struclturalism, along with Boas & Sapir, and the researchers of what is known the post-bloomfieldian linguistics.

3. Generativism

The work of Noam Chomsky became the basis for the generativism approach to linguistics. It was originally a way to explain how humans acquire language in the first place, but soon it came to be used to explain the different phenomena that occur in all natural languages. The generative theory of language suggests that, in its most basic form, language is made up of certain rules that apply to all humans and all languages. This led to the theory of "universal grammar", that all humans are capable of learning grammar. All of this was developed in the second half of the 20th century, with Noam Chomsky taking into account the work of Zellig Harris as well.

4. Cognitivism

The last linguistic school of thought on our list emerged in the 1950s as a reaction to generativism. In basic terms, cognitivism says that language emerges from human cognitive processes. It challenges "universal grammar" by suggesting that grammar is not something that all humans can inherently understand, but rather it is learned by using language. In this sense, it is a bit similar to functionalism. However, the main focus of cognitivism is how language is based on meaning that the mind creates.

Part Two: Branches of linguistics

The following are the main branches of linguistics.

- **Historical Linguistics:** Historical Linguistics defines the evolution of languages over a span of time. Also, what changes a language has to undergo from the past many years. Also, you will understand what the different languages that evolved over the years are. It is the branch of Linguistics that investigates how languages change over time. Historical linguists have studied language change by relying exclusively on diachronic methods. These involve analyzing the structure of language from a succession of dates in the past and highlighting those structural features (phonological, morphological or syntactic) that appear to have changed over that period of time.

- **Descriptive Linguistics:** it is the study of the grammar, classification, and arrangement of the features of a language at a given time, without reference to the history of the language or comparison with other languages. It gives description of internal phonological, grammatical and semantic structures of language. It provides data which confirm or refute the theories put forward in General Linguistics.

- **Theoretical Linguistics:** Theoretical linguistics is the branch of linguistics which inquires into the nature of language itself and seeks to answer fundamental questions as to what language is and why languages have the properties they have. It inquires into the nature of language or languages without regard for practical applications.

- **Applied Linguistics:** Applied Linguistics is the branch that deals with a problem-solving way in language and to provide better real-life issues related to the language. It is a combined knowledge field that gains knowledge from other branches, including psychology,

sociology, anthropology. It is the application of the concepts and findings of Linguistics to a variety of practical tasks, including language teaching. It is an interdisciplinary approach that identifies, investigates, and offers solutions to language-related real-life problems. Some of the academic fields related to applied linguistics are education, psychology, communication research, anthropology, and sociology. It is also concerned with general descriptive branches of linguistics.

- **Socio Linguistics:** It deals with the effects of society and the social life of a person on his language. Also, it deals with the effects of the interaction between languages. The study of **relationship between language** and **society**. It studies language use in structures of society. It takes into account such **factors** as the social backgrounds of both the speaker and the addressee (i.e. their age, sex, social class, ethnic background, degree of integration into their neighborhood, etc.), the relationship between speaker and addressee (good friends, employer–employee, teacher–pupil, grandmother–grandchild, etc.) and the context and manner of the interaction (in bed, in the supermarket, in a TV studio, in church, **loudly**, whispering, over the phone, by fax, etc.) These factors are considered crucial to understanding of language in use.

- **Computational Linguistics:** This factor is concerned with the perception and study of written and spoken languages. In computer science, it deals with coding and programming skills, the analysis, synthesis and comprehension of written and spoken language, translating texts from one language to another, and retrieving texts that relate to a specific topic.

- **Psycholinguistics:** It deals with the study of various psychological factors that include how humans use and speak their language. Or simply, it is the study of relationship between language and psychology. It studies the role of human mind and cognitive structures in language acquisition. It addresses the question of how the mentally represented grammar (linguistic competence) is employed in the production and comprehension of speech (linguistic performance). This branch put forwards the view that language acquisition is an inborn capability in human beings, example: Chomsky: LAD & Innateness Hypothesis.

- **Neurolinguistics:** It is the study of Linguistics in relationship to human brain. It addresses the question: how is linguistic knowledge represented in the brain? The direct study of the human brain is fraught with difficulties. So it studies brain-damaged patients who suffer from language disorders. The study of patients with various types of brain damage has revealed that different parts of the brain are associated with (i.e. control) different functions

- **Corpus Linguistics:** Corpus linguistics is the study of language as expressed in corpora (samples) of "real world" text. Corpora is a large and structured body of text that is electronically stored and processed. So CL is the study of machine readable data. It is aimed at checking occurrences or validating linguistic rules within a specific language territory.

- **Anthropological Linguistics:** Anthropological linguistics is the subfield of linguistics and anthropology, which deals with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, and its role in making and maintaining cultural practices and societal structures in past and present.

- **Comparative Linguistics:** It defines how a language is similar and different from others. It deals with the properties of a language and its origin. Also, it deals with developing languages that are two or more languages having the same parent.

- **Stylistics:** It deals with the study and interpretation of your tone. However, it does not limit symbolism, regional accents, dialogues, rhyme, sentence structure, etc.

- **Discourse Analysis**: the study of language beyond the level of sentence (larger chunks). DA is an interdisciplinary approach. It is a **research** based approach to the study of written and spoken language **in real use** or **social context**. DA focuses on the naturally occurring language