

Айтбаева А.Т.,
ОИӨК «Кыргызстан эл аралык университети»
Айтбаева А.Т.,
УНПК «Международный университет Кыргызстана»
Aitbaeva A.T.,
ERPC "International University of Kyrgyzstan"

ЛИНГВИСТИКАНЫН МАСШТАБЫ, АНЫКТАМАСЫ, АТКАРГАН КЫЗМАТЫ ЖАНА АНЫН ИЛИМДЕГИ ОРДУ

ЛИНГВИСТИКА: МАСШТАБ, ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ, ФУНКЦИЯ И ЕЁ СТАТУС КАК НАУКИ

SCOPE, DEFINITION, FUNCTION AND STATUS OF LINGUISTICS AS A SCIENCE

Аннотациясы: Лингвистика – бул билим берүү, антропология, тилди үйрөнүү, когнитивдик психология жана философия сыяктуулар түрдүү жааттар менен түздөн түз байланышкан изилделип жана өнүгүп жаткан областы. Өзүмдүнишптемде мен өзүмө суроо берем, лингвистика деген эмне, анын аныктоосу, курамы, функциясы жана ошондой эле эмне үчүн бүгүнкү күндө ал илим макамына ээ.

Негизги сөздөр: Лингвистика, билим берүү, тилди үйрөнүү, илим.

Аннотация: Лингвистика – это растущая и интересная область изучения, имеющая непосредственную связь с разнообразными сферами, такими как образование, антропология, обучению языку, когнитивной психологией и философией. В своей статье я задаюсь вопросом, что такое лингвистика, ее определение, содержание, функции, а также, почему на сегодняшний день она имеет статус науки.

Ключевые слова: лингвистика, образование, обучение языку, наука.

Abstract: Linguistics is a growing and interested area of study, having a direct hearing on fields as diverse as education, anthropology, sociology, language teaching, cognitive psychology and philosophy. In my article I answer the question what is linguistics, its scope, function, definition and why it has a status of a science nowadays.

Key words: Linguistics, education, language teaching, science.

Fundamentally, linguistics is concerned with the nature of language and communication. Linguistics is the scientific study of language. By this, I mean language in general, not a particular language.

If I was concerned with studying an individual language, I would say: “I am studying French... or English”, or whichever language we happen to be studying. But linguistics does not study an individual language; it studies “language” in general. Linguistics is scientific in nature and it approaches language scientifically. So Victoria and Fromkin rightly say:

“The scientific study of human language is called linguistics”.

Linguistics can be understood as a science in both general and specific terms. Generally, we use the term “science” for any knowledge that is based on clear, systematic and rational understanding. Thus we often speak of the “science of politics: or statecraft of “the science of cooking”. However, we also use the term “science” for the systematic study of phenomena enabling us to state some principles or theories regarding the phenomena; this study proceeds by examination of publicly verifiable data obtained through observation

of phenomena, and explanation after adequate observation of data, which should be consistent, i.e. there should be no contradictions between different parts of the explanation or statement; and economical, i.e. a precise and non-redundant manner of statement is to be preferred. Let me apply these criteria of science to linguistics. Linguistics studies language: language is a phenomenon which is both objective and variable¹. Like natural phenomenon in the physical world, it has a concrete shape and occurrence. In the same way as a physicist or chemist takes materials and measures their weights, densities etc. to determine their nature, the linguist studies the components of language, e.g. observing the occurrence of speech-sounds, or the way in which words begin or end. The scientific nature of language is asserted by Jean Aitchison:

“Linguistics tries to answer two basic questions: What is language and How does it work.”

Language, like other phenomena, is objective because it is observable with the senses, i.e., it can be heard with the ear, it can be seen when the vocal organs are in movement, or when reading words on a page. Observation leads to processes of classification and definition. In science, each observable phenomenon is to be given a precise explanation. Its nature has to be described completely. Thus, for example, the chemist classifies elements into metals and non-metals; a biologist classifies living things into plants and animals. Similarly, linguistics observes the features of language, classifies them as being sound features of particular types, or words belonging to particular classes on the basis of similarity or difference. But while linguistics shares some characteristics of empirical science, it is also a social science because it studies language which is a form of social behavior and exists in interaction between human beings in society. Language is also linked to human mental processes. Thus, it cannot be treated always as objective phenomena. We deal with language scientifically as S. PitCordeer says:

“Linguistics is concerned with the nature of human language”.

Thus, linguistics is both an empirical and a social science. In fact, it is a human discipline since it is concerned with human language; so it is part of the study of humanities as well. This includes the study of literature, and appreciation of poetry. In taking language study, linguists follow several approaches: Descriptive to describe the structure of language, Comparative to compare languages and establish correspondences between them and Historical to examine the history and evolution of languages.

Moreover, since every branch of knowledge uses language, linguistics is central to all areas of knowledge. In linguistics, the traditional distinctions of science, art and humanities are not relevant. As Lyons puts it, “linguistics has natural links with a wide range of academic disciplines”. To say that linguistics is a science is not to deny that, due to its subject matter, it is relatedness to philosophy and literary criticism.² Modern linguistics has grown from an autonomous discipline to one linked with disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, literary studies and branches of linguistics have developed, as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and stylistics. Linguistic theory scientifically discovers the nature of universal grammar whose principles characterize all human languages. The linguist’s aim is to discover the ‘laws of human language’ as the physicist’s is to discover the laws of the physical universe.

An increasing interest in linguistics may be noted among workers in anthropology, culture history, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. For all of them linguistics is of basic importance: its data and methods show better than those of any other discipline dealing with socialized behavior the possibility of a truly scientific study of society. Linguists should, on the other hand, become aware of what their science may mean for the interpretation of human conduct in general.

The purpose of this paper is to point out some of the connections between linguistics and other

¹W. J. Frawley, ed., *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (2ded., 4 vol., 2003)

²Radford, A, Atkinson, M, Britain, D, Clahsen, H, and Spence, A, *Linguistics-An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2011

scientific disciplines, and above all to raise the question in what sense linguistics can be called a “science”.

The value of linguistics for anthropology and culture history has long been recognized. As linguistic research has proceeded, language has proved useful as a tool in the sciences of man and has itself required and obtained a great deal of light from the rest of these sciences. It is difficult for a modern linguist to confine himself to his traditional subject matter. Unless he is somewhat unimaginative, he cannot but share in some or all of the mutual interests which tie up linguistics with anthropology and culture history, with sociology, with psychology, with philosophy, and, more remotely, with physics and physiology.

Language is becoming increasingly valuable as a guide to the scientific study of a given culture. In a sense, the network of cultural patterns of a civilization is indexed in the language which expresses that civilization.³ It is an illusion to think that we can understand the significant outlines of a culture through sheer observation and without the guide of the linguistic symbolism which makes these outlines significant and intelligible to society. Some day the attempt to master a primitive culture without the help of the language of its society will seem as amateurish as the labors of a historian who cannot handle the original documents of the civilization which he is describing.

Language is a guide to “social reality”. Though language is not ordinarily thought of essential interest to the students of social science, it powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes.⁴ Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the “real world” is to a large extent

unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.

The understanding of a simple poem, for instance, involves not merely an understanding of the single words in their average significance, but a full comprehension of the whole life of the community as it is mirrored in the words, or as it is suggested by their overtones. Even comparatively simple acts of perception are very much more at the mercy of the social patterns called words than we might suppose. If one draws some dozen lines, for instance, of different shapes, one perceives them as divisible into such categories as “straight”, “crooked”, “curved”, “zigzag” because of the classificatory suggestiveness of the linguistic terms themselves. We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

For the more fundamental problems of the student of human culture, therefore, a knowledge of linguistic mechanisms and historical developments is certain to become more and more important as our analysis of social behavior becomes more refined. From this standpoint we may think of language as the *symbolic guide to culture*. In another sense too linguistics is of great assistance in the study of cultural phenomena.⁵ Many cultural objects and ideas have been diffused in connection with their terminology, so that a study of the distribution of culturally significant terms often throws unexpected light on the history of inventions and ideas. This type of research, already fruitful in European and Asiatic culture history, is destined to be of great assistance in the reconstruction of primitive cultures.

It is very encouraging that the psychologist has been concerning himself more and more with linguistic data. So far it is doubtful if he has been able to contribute very much to the understanding of language behavior beyond what the linguist

³Lyons, J., *Language and Linguistics -An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2009

⁴Collins Dictionary of Sociology, 3rd ed. © HarperCollins Publishers 2000

⁵Yule, G., *the Study of Language*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2010.

has himself been able to formulate on the basis of his data. But the feeling is growing rapidly, and justly, that the psychological explanations of the linguists themselves need to be restated in more general terms, so that purely linguistic facts may be seen as specialized forms of symbolic behavior.

Linguistics is at once one of the most difficult and one of the most fundamental fields of inquiry. It is probable that a really fruitful integration of linguistic and psychological studies lies still in the future.

Language is primarily a cultural or social product and must be understood as such. Its regularity and formal development rest on considerations of a biological and psychological nature, to be sure. But this regularity and our underlying unconsciousness of its typical forms do not make of linguistics a mere adjunct to either biology or psychology. Better than any other social science, linguistics shows by its data and methods, necessarily more easily defined than the data and methods of any other type of discipline dealing with socialized behavior, the possibility of a truly scientific study of society which does not ape the methods nor attempt to adopt unrevised the concepts of the natural sciences. It is peculiarly important that linguists, who are often accused, and accused justly, of failure to look beyond the pretty patterns of their subject matter, should become aware of what their science may mean

for the interpretation of human conduct in general.

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