



THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND MODERN STRUCTURE OF LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

This article examines the formation, subject matter, and core tasks of linguistics as an independent scientific discipline. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the social nature of language, its structural organization, functional characteristics, and historical development within the framework of general linguistics. Particular attention is paid to the main branches of modern linguistics—extralinguistics, intralinguistics, and comparative linguistics—and their role in contemporary linguistic research.

Keywords: Linguistics, general linguistics, language system, language and society, extralinguistics, intralinguistics, comparative linguistics.

Introduction

Linguistics is a fundamental humanities discipline that studies language as a complex and dynamic system. Language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for cognition and a carrier of culture. Therefore, the scientific investigation of language is closely connected with social, philosophical, and cultural studies. According to Saussure, language represents a structured system of signs governed by internal relations rather than isolated elements.

The term linguistics derived from the Latin *lingua* (“language”) and is widely used alongside language studies. Linguistics investigates the origin of language, its structure, functional mechanisms, and historical development. The primary object of linguistics is human language as a social phenomenon. Language is shaped by historical and cultural processes, and its development depends on



*Modern American Journal of Linguistics,
Education, and Pedagogy*

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

Volume 01, Issue 09, December, 2025

Website: usajournals.org

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social interaction. As noted by Sapir, language cannot be studied independently of the culture and society in which it functions.

General linguistics focuses on identifying universal principles common to all languages. These include phonological organization, grammatical structure, semantic systems, and communicative functions. In addition, general linguistics examines the relationship between language and thought, as well as methodological approaches to linguistic research.

The development of linguistic theory and methodology has resulted in the differentiation of linguistics into several major branches, each of which approaches language from a distinct theoretical and analytical perspective. This division reflects the complex nature of language as both a structured system and a social phenomenon.

Extralinguistics examines language in relation to factors external to its internal structure, emphasizing the interaction between language and society, culture, cognition, and psychology. Scholars in this field argue that linguistic phenomena cannot be fully understood without considering the social and cognitive contexts in which language operates.

One of the most prominent subfields of extralinguistics is **sociolinguistics**, which investigates the correlation between linguistic variation and social variables such as social class, age, gender, ethnicity, and geographical location. Sociolinguistic research also addresses issues of language policy, multilingualism, diglossia, and language attitudes, demonstrating how social structures influence language use and change.

Another key area is **psycholinguistics**, which explores the mental processes involved in language production, comprehension, and acquisition. Psycholinguistic studies focus on how language is processed in the human mind, how children acquire their first language, and how second languages are learned and stored cognitively. This subfield establishes an important link between linguistics, psychology, and cognitive science.

Ethnolinguistics (also known as anthropological linguistics) investigates the relationship between language and culture. It examines how linguistic categories reflect cultural values, belief systems, and worldviews. Through the study of



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discourse, metaphor, and lexical classification, ethnolinguistics reveals the deep interconnection between language, culture, and identity.

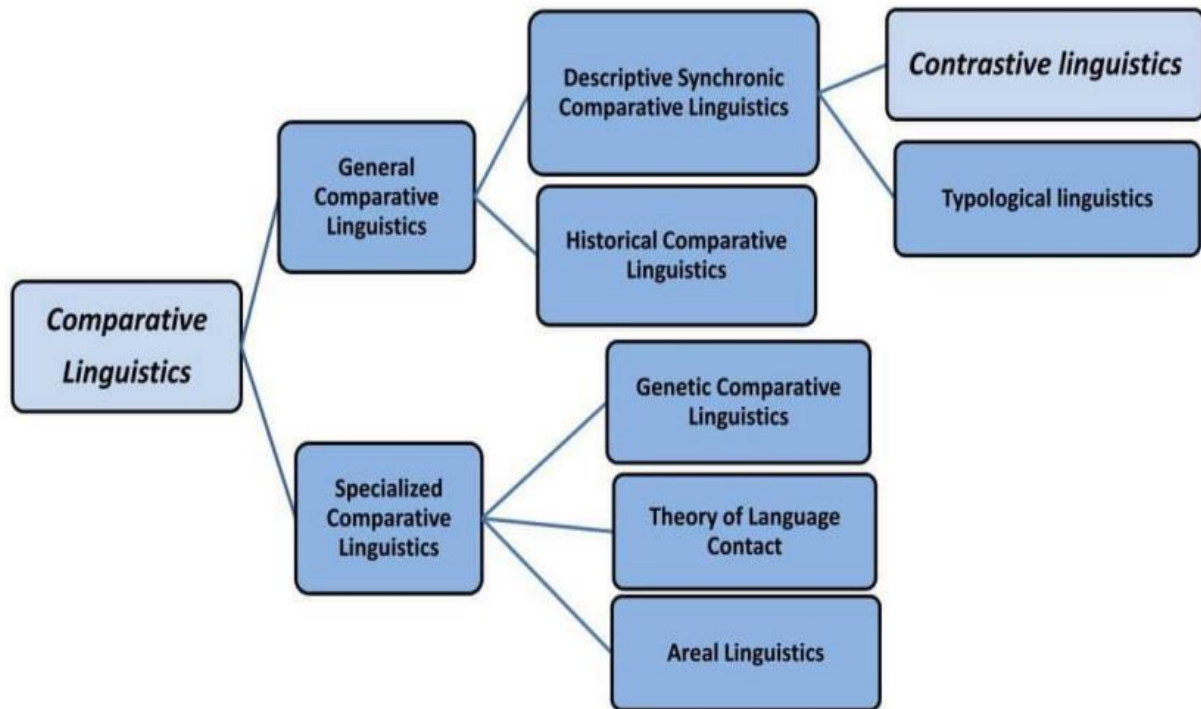
Intralinguistics focuses on the internal structure and formal organization of language, treating it as an autonomous system governed by internal rules and regularities. This branch aims to describe and explain how linguistic units function and interact within a language system independently of external influences. Intralinguistic analysis encompasses several core domains, including **phonetics and phonology**, which study speech sounds and their systematic patterns; **morphology**, which examines word formation and grammatical categories; **syntax**, which investigates sentence structure; and **lexicology and semantics**, which analyze vocabulary and meaning relations.

The foundations of intralinguistics were laid by **structural linguistics**, particularly in the works of Leonard Bloomfield, who emphasized the scientific description of language based on observable data and formal patterns [7]. Structuralism viewed language as a self-contained system and deliberately minimized psychological and social explanations. In contemporary linguistics, intralinguistics has expanded to include generative, functional, and cognitive approaches. Despite theoretical differences, all intralinguistic frameworks share a common goal: to reveal the underlying principles governing linguistic structure. Comparative linguistics is concerned with the systematic comparison of languages to identify similarities, differences, and universal principles of linguistic organization. This branch plays a central role in understanding language diversity and historical development. A major component of comparative linguistics is **historical-comparative linguistics**, which seeks to establish genetic relationships among languages. By comparing phonological, morphological, and lexical correspondences, scholars reconstruct proto-languages and trace the evolution of language families such as Indo-European, Turkic, and Uralic.

Another important subfield is **contrastive linguistics**, which compares languages synchronically, often regardless of genetic relatedness. Contrastive analysis aims to identify structural correspondences and divergences between languages, particularly for applied purposes such as foreign language teaching, translation, and bilingual education. According to Nadiya Andreychuk's textbook



Contrastive Linguistics, the relationship between contrastive linguistics and comparative linguistics is illustrated in the table below.



Comparative linguistics also contributes to **linguistic typology**, which classifies languages based on shared structural features rather than historical origin. Typological studies reveal both universal tendencies and language-specific patterns, enhancing our understanding of the range and limits of human language.

Conclusion

Linguistics is a multifaceted discipline that examines language as both a structured system and a social phenomenon. The interaction of extralinguistic, intralinguistic, and comparative approaches enhances linguistic theory and deepens our understanding of language universals and diversity. The continued integration of these branches ensures the relevance and development of modern linguistics.



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Website: usajournals.org

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