

Degree 3, (English Honours)

Paper – Eight

Section - 2

Subject- Linguistics

Lecture - 1

Definition, Scope and Branches of Linguistics

Definition of Linguistics

The word Linguistics has been derived from Latin lingua (tongue) and istics (knowledge or science). Etymologically, therefore. Linguistics is the scientific study of language. But it is the study not of one particular language but of human language in general. It studies language as a universal and recognizable part of human behaviour. It attempts to analyse and describe language. The field of linguistics comprises understanding of the place of language in human life, the ways in which it is organised to fulfil the needs it serves, and the function it performs.

So, linguistics is that science which studies the origin, organisation, nature and development of language descriptively, historically, comparatively and explicitly, and formulates the general rules related to language. Diachronic (historical) linguistics studies the development of language through history through time, for example, the way in which French and Italian have evolved from Latin. Synchronic linguistics investigates how the people speak and use

language in given speech community at a given time. In comparative linguistics one is concerned with comparing two or more different languages. Linguistics, therefore, is the science that describes and classifies languages. The linguist identifies and describes the units and patterns of the sound system, the words and morphemes, and the phrases and the sentences, that is the structure of language, as completely, accurately and economically as possible.

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