

# **Branches of Linguistics**

It is the study of language --- how it is put together and how it functions. Various building blocks of different types and sizes are combined to make up a language. Sounds are brought together and sometimes when this happens, they change their form and do interesting things. Words are arranged in a certain order and sometimes the beginnings and endings of the words are changed to adjust the meaning. Then the meaning itself can be affected by the arrangement of words and by the knowledge of the speaker about what the hearer will understand. Linguistics is the study of all of this. There are various branches of linguistics which are given their own name, some of which are described below.

## **Historical Linguistics:**

Historical linguistics is the study of not only the history of languages as the name implies but also the study of how language changes and how languages are related to one another. The main job of historical linguists is to learn how languages are related. When a related group of languages has been studied in enough detail, it is possible to know almost exactly how most words, sounds and grammar rules have changed in the languages.

Historical linguistics is the branch of linguistics concerned with the development of a language or of languages over time. Traditionally known as philology.

## **Descriptive Linguistics:**

Descriptive linguistics is defined as the branch of language science that is the structure of language as it exists today. An example of descriptive linguistics is someone saying “OMG” rather than “oh my God”. It is the branch of linguistics that describes the structure of a language as it exists, without reference to its history or to comparison with other languages.

The term “Descriptive Grammar” refers to an objective non-judgmental description of the grammatical constructions in a language. Contrast with prescriptive grammar:

Specialists in descriptive grammar (linguists) examines the principles and patterns that underlie the use of words, phrases, clauses and sentences. In contrast,

prescriptive grammarians (such as most editors and teachers) attempt to enforce rules concerning “correct” or “incorrect” usage.

### **Applied Linguistics:**

It is an interdisciplinary field of linguistics which 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.

The term applied linguistics refers to the use of language related research in a wide variety of fields, among which include language acquisition, language teaching, literacy, literary studies, gender studies, speech therapy, discourse analysis, censorship, professional communication, media studies, translation studies, lexicography and forensic linguistics.

In contrast with general linguistics or theoretical linguistics, applied linguistics tackle “real world problems in which language is a central issue”, according to Christopher Brumfit’s article “Teacher professionalism and Research” in the 1995 book “Principles and Practice in Applied Linguistics.”

### **Theoretical Linguistics:**

It is the branch of linguistics which inquires into the nature of language itself and seeks to answer fundamental questions as to what language is; how it works; how universal grammar (UG) as a domain-specific mental organ operates; what its unique properties are; how does language relate to other cognitive processes etc. theoretical linguists are most concerned with constructing models of linguistic knowledge and ultimately developing a linguistic theory.

Theoretical linguistics is that branch of linguistics that is most concerned with developing models of linguistic knowledge. Part of this endeavor involves the search for and explanation of linguistic universals that is, properties all languages have in common. The fields that are generally considered the core of theoretical linguistics are syntax, phonology, morphology and semantics. Phonology is often informed by phonetics, which like psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics is often not considered part of theoretical linguistics.

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