

Chapter 12 Theories and Schools of Modern linguistics



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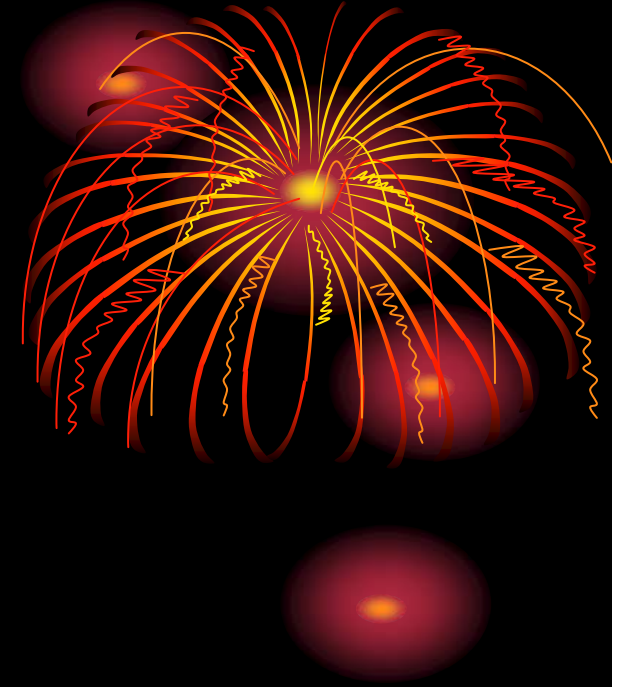
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Introduction

- 1 Modern linguistics began from the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), who is often described as “father of modern linguistics”. His lectures are collected in the book “*Course in General Linguistics*”.
- 2 Saussure believed that language is a **System of Signs**. This sign is the union of a form and an idea, which he called the **signifier** and the **signified**.
- 3 Saussure’s ideas on the **arbitrary** nature of sign, on the relational nature of linguistic units, on the distinction of **Langue** and **Parole** and of **Synchronic** and **Diachronic** linguistics pushed linguistics into a brand new stage.



12.1 The Prague School

12.1.1 Introduction

- 1) The Prague School can be traced back to its first meeting under the leadership of V. Mathesius 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.
- 2) Three most important ideas developed in Prague School

12.1.2 Phonology & Phonological Oppositions

- 1) The Prague School is best known for its contribution to phonology and the distinction of phonetics and phonology.
- 2) Its representative is Trubetzkoy.
- 3) Oppositions (a---l)
bilateral opposition; multilateral opposition; proportional opposition; isolated opposition;
privative opposition; gradual opposition; equivalent opposition; neutralisable opposition;
constant opposition.

12.1.3 Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP)

- 1) Theme & Rheme.
- 2) Communicative Dynamism (CD).



- Picture from the International Phonetic Congress, Amsterdam 1932
The person in the middle is the Dutch linguist Jac. van Ginneken; on his left is Nikolaj Trubetzkoy

12.2 The London School

12.2 The London School

12.2.1 Malinowski's theories

12.2.2 Firth's theories

- 1) language is a means of doing things and of making others do things.
- 2) Prosodic Analysis.

12.2.3 Halliday & Systemic- Functional Grammar

1) Systemic Grammar

2) Functional Grammar

i) **The ideational function** is to convey new information, to communicate a content that is unknown to the hearer.

ii) **The interpersonal function** embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations.

iii) **The textual function** refers to the fact that language has mechanisms to make any stretch of spoken or written discourse into a coherent and unified text and make a living passage different from a random of sentences.

12.3 American Structuralism

12.3.1 Early Period: Boas & Sapir

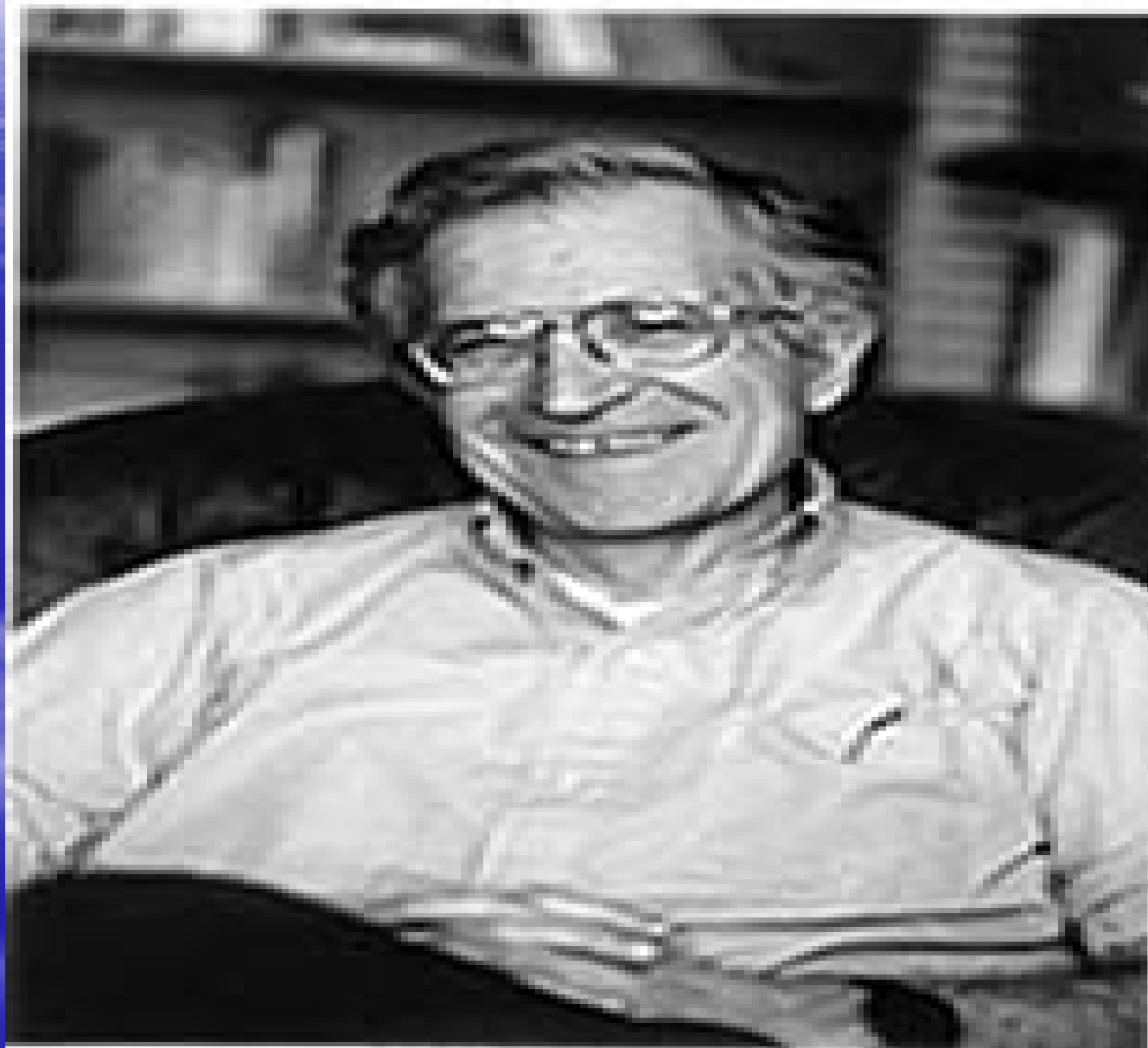
12.3.2 Bloomfield's theory

- 1) Bloomfieldian Era
- 2) Behaviourism
- Stimulus-Response

12.3.3 Post- Bloomfieldian Linguistics

- 1) Harris & *Methods in Structural Linguistics*
- 2) Hockett & *A Course in Modern Linguistics*
- 3) K. Pike & Tagmemics

12.4 Transformational-Generative Grammar



1) Chomsky's *Syntactic Structure* (1957) marked the beginning of the Chomskan Revolution.

2) TG Grammar has seen five stages of development since its birth:
the Classical Theory; the Standard Theory; the Extended Theory; the Revised Extended Standard Theory and the Minimalist Program.

12.4.1 the Innateness Hypothesis

language is innate, and children are born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD).

12.4.2 What is a Generative Grammar?

1) By a Generative Grammar, Chomsky simply means "a system of rules that in some explicit and well-defined way assigns structural descriptions to sentences.

2) Chomsky put forward three different levels to evaluate grammar on:
Observational Adequacy; Descriptive Adequacy and the Explanatory adequacy.

12.4.3 The Classical Theory

12.4.4 The Standard Theory

12.4.5 The Extended- Standard Theory

12.4.6 Later Theories

12.5 Revisionists? Rebels?

■ 12.5.1 Case Grammar

Case Grammar is an approach that stresses the relationship of elements in a sentence. It is a type of generative grammar developed by C.J. Fillmore in the late 1960s. In this grammar, the verb is the most important part of the sentence, and has a number of case-making relationships with various noun phrases.

■ 12.5.2 Generative Semantics.

Generative Semantics, developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, is a reaction to Chomsky's Syntactic-based TG Grammar.

The leading figures are J.R. Ross, G. Lakoff, J.D. Cawley, and P. Postal.

Generative Semantics considers that all sentences are generated from a semantic structure.

Generative Semantics holds that there is no principled distinction between syntactic processes and semantic processes.

Questions for Discussion

- 1 Why is Saussure hailed as the father of modern linguistics?
- 2 What are the three important points of the Prague School?
- 3 What is the essence of Functional Sentence Perspective?
- 4 What is special about systemic –Functional linguistics?
- 5 What are the special features of American structuralism?
- 6 How is behaviorist Psychology related to linguistics?
- 7 How many stages of development has Chomsky's TG Grammar undergone?
- 8 What is special about TG Grammar?
- 9 What is Case Grammar?