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Grammar origin and development

(for the students of English language and literature)

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پیشگفتار ناشر

کتاب‌های دانشگاه پیام نور حسب مورد و با توجه به شرایط مختلف یک درس در یک یا چند رشته دانشگاهی، به صورت کتاب درسی، متن آزمایشگاهی، فرادرسی، و کمک درسی چاپ می‌شوند.

کتاب درسی ثمره کوشش‌های علمی صاحب اثر است که براساس نیازهای درسی دانشجویان و سرفصل‌های مصوب تهیه و پس از داوری علمی، طراحی آموزشی، و ویرایش علمی در گروه‌های علمی و آموزشی، به چاپ می‌رسد. پس از چاپ ویرایش اول اثر، با نظرخواهی‌ها و داوری علمی مجدد و با دریافت نظرهای اصلاحی و متناسب با پیشرفت علوم و فناوری، صاحب اثر در کتاب تجدیدنظر می‌کند و ویرایش جدید کتاب با اعمال ویرایش زبانی و صوری جدید چاپ می‌شود.

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To

Those who led me to me

Preface

The Study of language dates back to the time when human beings began to think about themselves and nature. Due to complexities of the language and its abstract nature, different schools of thought are developed to explain language and its manifestations. This book briefly looks at prominent works in the grammar up to now.

Chapter one deals with the early study of what we call grammar. In ancient age language was focus of study, because it reflects the way of thinking and logical capacities of the mind. Early study of the knowledge by Greek scholars was around the nature and the language of human beings who are the most complicated creatures of the world. This kind of grammar today is called traditional grammar and its trace could be seen in most Indo-European languages.

Chapter two views grammar from an aspect which is totally different from the traditional grammar. Changes during the Renaissance including looking at the world and human beings from a new angle and modernization led to new horizons in the knowledge. Structuralism after Renaissance penetrated in science, architecture and also affected the study of grammar. In this field structuralism manifested itself in different colors. In Europe and America, structuralism on the basis of demands and historical background

contributed differently to the study of language differently. In phonology, morphology, and syntax structural view formed the trunk of the study.

Generative grammar, discussed in chapter three, is the result of structural view to language or in other words its origin is in structuralism. Chomsky, founder of this school, believed that the language faculty is species specific and consists of two levels. After applying phrase structure rules to lexicon and forming deep structure, transformational rules produce surface structure.

Chapter four briefly points to the latest developments in the generative school called Universal Grammar (UG). The gist of UG is that all human beings genetically and mentally have some principles and parameters, regarding the structure of the language and no language disobeys them. It is claimed that Principles and Parameters solve Plato's problem.

Chapter 1

Traditional Grammar

After reading this chapter you will know:

1. Greek scholars' achievement like Plato and Aristotle in language studies.
2. The relationship between word and its reference or meaning.
3. Roman's achievement in language studies.
4. The stages leading to today's parts of speech.

1.1 Greece

It is sensible to begin the history of linguistic studies with achievements of the ancient Greeks. It is simply that the Greek thinkers on language, and on the problems raised by linguistic investigations, initiated the studies that we can call linguistic science in its widest sense, and that this science was a continuing focus of interest from ancient Greece until the present day in an unbroken succession of scholarship, in a way that each worker was conscious of and in some way reacting to the work of his predecessors.

The essential thing to keep in mind is that, with some important exceptions, most of the linguistic concepts, categories, and modes of description were taken over by Latin writers from prior Greek work, assisted by the fact that the two languages were very similar in their typology and organization. Politically the Romans were the masters of

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their Greek subject peoples; culturally they were, and were proud to be, the pupils of their Greek teachers.

This emphasis on the linguistic scholarship of Greece should not lead us to deny or to ignore significant work in applied linguistics (to use a later terminology) carried out in the Near East during the centuries preceding the Greek achievements.

Writing, originally in pictographic or character script, was devised in Egypt and in other parts of the world as well as, independently, in China and in Central America. The syllabic script which later became the source for the Greek alphabet was probably created from the Egyptian script progressively modified.

The Greeks of the classical age were already aware both of the existence of peoples speaking languages other than Greek and of dialectal divisions within the Greek-speaking population. There must have been considerable linguistic contacts between Greeks and non-Greeks in trade, diplomacy, and in much of everyday life in the Greek colonies - settlements of Greeks on the coastal fringes of non-Greek speaking areas in Asia Minor and Italy. We know surprisingly little about this. Herodotus and others quote and discuss foreign words, Plato admits in the *Cratylus* dialogue the possibility of the foreign origin of part of the Greek vocabulary, and we know of the existence of bilingual speakers and of professional interpreters. But of serious interest in the languages themselves among the Greeks there is no evidence; and the Greek designation of alien speakers as *bárbaroi* i.e. people who speak a language other than Greek, is probably indicative of their attitude.

Quite different was the Greek awareness of their dialectal divisions. The Greek language in Antiquity was more markedly divided into fairly sharply differentiated dialects than many other

languages were. This was due both to the settlement of the Greek-speaking areas by successive waves of invaders, and to the separation into relatively small and independent communities that the mountainous configuration of much of the Greek mainland and the scattered islands of the adjoining seas forced on them. But that these dialects were dialects of a single language and that the possession of this language united the Greeks as a whole people, despite the almost incessant wars waged between the different city states of the Greek world, is attested by at least one historian: Herodotus, in his account of the major achievement of a temporarily united Greece against the invading Persians at the beginning of the fifth century B.C., puts into the mouths of the Greek delegates a statement that among the bones of unity among the Greeks in resisting the barbarians was the whole Greek community, being of one blood and one tongue.

The first achievement of linguistic scholarship in Greece, essentially part of applied linguistics, necessarily occurred before records appeared. Early in the first millennium B.C. an alphabetic system for writing the Greek language was worked out, and this served as the basis for the Greek alphabet of classical Attic (Athenian) and the other literary dialects, and, together with the Roman alphabet, derived from western Greek variety of the Greek alphabet, became the parent of the most widely diffused means of writing in the world today.

Observations on language, always with reference to the Greek language, are found in the records we have of the pre-Socratic philosophers, the fifth-century rhetoricians, and Socrates, and in the writings of Plato, and Aristotle; but one must wait until the time of the Stoics (from the late fourth century B.C. on) for the separate recognition of linguistic studies within the much wider field of

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philosophy. A principal topic of discussion among the pre-Socratic philosophers and among the later Sophists was to what extent accepted standards, institutions, and judgments of what is right and wrong, just and unjust, and so on, were grounded in the nature of things and to what extent they were essentially the products of a tacit convention or even of explicit legislation. The theme of the *Cratylus* is a debate on the origin of language and on the relations between words and their meaning, or are they the result of convention and agreement? Both views are given due consideration in the mouths of the participants, without a definite conclusion being reached. The **naturalist** argument leaned, as it must, on the weight of onomatopoeia in a vocabulary and on a more general sound symbolism in the phonological structure of some words.

Later scholars took up more definite positions than we find in Plato. Aristotle firmly adopted a **conventionalist** point of view: Language is by convention; since no names arise naturally Onomatopoeia need not invalidate this, since onomatopoeic forms vary from language to language and are always cast within the phonology of the particular language. Aristotle's view of language is summed up at the beginning of the *De interpretatione*: Speech is the representation of the experiences of the mind and writing is the representation of speech.

Epicurus (341-270) took up a middle position, holding that word terms arose naturally but were modified by convention. More importantly in the history of linguistic, the Stoics favored the natural status of language, again relying heavily on onomatopoeia and sound symbolism: In the opinion of the Stoics names are naturally formed, the first sounds imitating the things which they name.

These opposing views of Aristotle and the Stoics are important

since they lead to the second linguistic controversy of Antiquity, **analogy** versus **anomaly**.

It seems clear that Aristotle favored analogy and the Stoics favored anomaly as the dominant theme in language. Later analogists tended to concentrate on linguistic questions for the purposes of literary criticism and of the maintenance of standards of correctness (Hellenismós): Stoic interests were more broadly based. The division may have been sharpened by the rivalry of Alexandria and Pergamum under Macedonian rule as two main centers of learning, Alexandria dominated by analogists and Pergamum by Stoics.

The regularities looked for by the analogists were those of formal paradigms, where in words of the same grammatical status had the same morphological terminations and accentual structure, and those involving the relations between form and meaning, whereby words that were comparable morphologically could be expected to bear comparable, analogical, meanings and without them paradigms of different word classes, and their subclasses (declensions and conjugations in Latin and Greek), in which repetitive patterns are summarized, would not be discoverable.

The anomalist case appeared, at first, more cogent when no adequate distinction was made between inflection and derivation within grammatical word form variations. It is a characteristic of Greek and indeed of most languages that the inflectional paradigms are much more regular and apply to entire classes of stems, whereas the incidence of derivational formations is more irregular. Almost all Greek nouns had forms for five cases, singular and plural, but derivational suffixes were restricted to specific noun stems; thus we find *pater*, *father*, and *pátrios*, *paternal*, but no corresponding form **métrios* with *méter*, *mother*. Likewise English derives nouns from

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adjectives by such varied formations as *true-truth*, *happy-happiness*, *hot-heat*, *high-height*, and *possible-possibility*, and some speakers would hesitate between (un) grammaticalness and (un)grammaticality.

The three main aspects of linguistic study that received specific attention among early Greek scholars were etymology, phonetics (pronunciation), and grammar. The first, etymology, aroused much enthusiasm, research, and speculation, and was stimulated by the nature-convention controversy about the origin and development of language. But the term etymology was understood and etymological enquiries were carried on under different ideas on the subject from those prevailing today.

Plato made a number of distinctions among classes of segmental phonemes in Greek, grouping together vowels in contrast to consonants and distinguishing within them between continuants and stops, the latter not being pronounceable without an adjacent vowel sound. He was also aware of accentual differences between words having similar sequences of segments, or letters.

The framework of grammatical description in western Antiquity was the word and paradigm model. Despite the richness of classical morphology, a theory of the morpheme wasn't achieved, and classical grammatical statements exhibit the strengths and the weaknesses of a word-based morphology.

Protagoras considered the nominal category of gender in Greek, and is reported to have wished *ménis*, *anger*, and *péléx*, *helmet*, to be masculine instead of feminine, presumably on the grounds of a semantic association with male characteristics and activities rather than with female.

Plato, however, is said to have been the first to take the subject seriously, as in his dialogues we encounter a fundamental division of

the Greek sentence into a nominal and a verbal component, *ónoma* and *rhéma* which remained the primary grammatical distinction underlying syntactic analysis and word classification in all future European linguistic description.

Aristotle maintained this distinction, but added a third class of syntactic component, the *syndesmoi*, a class covering what were later to be distinguished as conjunctions (and probably prepositions, though this is not apparent from the examples cited), the article, and pronouns.

Aristotle additionally gave a formal definition of the word as a linguistic unit: a component of the sentence, *méros lógou*, having a meaning of its own but not further divisible into meaningful units.

The indication of time, recognized by Aristotle, is only part of the semantic function of the Greek verbal tenses. As in many languages, two dimensions are involved, time reference, and completion as against incompleteness or continuity. Four tenses can be arranged in relation to these two categorical distinctions as in table (1):

Table 1-1 Time and aspect distinctions

Time	Present	Past
Aspect	Present	Imperfect tense
Incomplete	Graphe Is writing	Egraphe Was writing
Complete	Perfect tense	Pluperfect tense
	Gegraphe Has written	Egegrape Had written

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Unlike the Stoics, whose concern for language was primarily from a philosophical viewpoint, linguists working in or connected with Alexandria were predominantly interested in language as apart of literary studies, and were adherents of the analogist position. They applied analogist principles to textual emendation and to the determination of standards of acceptability (Hellénismós). Homeric studies received special attention in Alexandria, and one of the most famous Alexandrians, Aristarchus (second century B.C.), has been considered a founder of scientific Homeric scholarship; he is also credited with a number of developments in grammar, and was the teacher of Dionysius Thrax (c. 100 B.C.), who is credited with the authorship of the first surviving explicit description of the Greek language.

The extant *Téchné Grammatiké*, as it is called, runs to fifteen printed pages and 25 sections, and comprises a summary account of the structure of Greek. Its major omission is any statement of Greek syntax, although the word class system and the morphological analysis that are set out in it formed the basis of later syntactic statements.

The *Téchné* begins with an exposition by Dionysius of the context of grammatical studies as this was seen by the Alexandrians. He writes: "Grammar is the practical knowledge of the general usages of poets and prose writers. It has six parts: first, accurate reading (aloud) with due regard to the prosodies; second, explanation of the literary expressions in the works; third, the provision of notes on phraseology and subject matter; fourth, the discovery of etymologies; fifth, the working out of analogical regularities; sixth, the appreciation of literary compositions, which is the noblest part of grammar".

The description begins with an account of the phonetic values of

the letters of the Greek alphabet.

Allophonic differences are not mentioned, but a later commentator, referring to the three-fold distinction of sound, shape, and name already made by the stoics, pointed out that there was more than one pronunciation to a single letter shape.

The author identified the consonantal triads of Greek, *p, ph, b, t, thd*, and *k, kh, g*, as sharing the same sets of articulatory distinctions. He differentiated the aspirated and unaspirated members.

The eight class names are worth quoting with their definitions as an example of the conciseness of terminology that had been achieved by this time and of the application to linguistics of Aristotelian methods of classification:

Ónoma (noun): a part of speech inflected for case, signifying a concrete or abstract entity

Rhéma (verb): a part of speech without case inflection, but inflected for tense, person, and number, signifying an activity or process performed or undergone.

Methoché (participle): a part of speech sharing the features of the verb and the noun.

Árthron (article): a part of speech inflected for case and preposed or postposed to nouns,

Antónymía (pronoun): a part of speech substitutable for a noun and marked for person,

Próthesis (preposition): a part of speech placed before other words in composition and in syntax,

Rpírrhéma (adverb): a part of speech without inflection, in modification of or in addition to a verb.

Syéndesmós (conjunction): a part of speech binding together the discourse and filling gaps in its interpretation.

1.2 Rome

The Romans had for long enjoyed contact with Greek material culture and intellectual ideas, through the Greek settlements in the south of Italy; and they had learned writing from the western Greeks. But it was during the third and second centuries B.C. that the Greek world fell progressively within the control of Rome, by now the mistress of the whole of Italy. The expansion of Roman rule was almost complete by the Christian era, and the Roman Empire, as it now was, had achieved a relatively permanent position.

It is probable that Crates as a Stoic introduced mainly Stoic doctrine in his teaching; but Greek thinkers and Greek learning in general entered the Roman world increasingly in this period and by the time of Varro (116-27 B.C.), both Alexandrian and Stoic opinions on language were known and discussed. Varro is the first serious Latin writer on linguistic questions of whom we have any records.

One major feature of Varro's linguistic work is his lengthy exposition and formalization of the opposing views in the analogy-anomaly controversy and a good deal of his description and analysis of Latin appears in his treatment of this problem.

One of Varro's most penetrating observations in this context was the distinction between derivational and inflectional formation, a distinction not commonly made in Antiquity.

Quite a number of writers of Latin grammars, working in different parts of the Roman Empire, are known to us from the first century A.D. onward. Of them Priscian is the most familiar. He followed the Stoic word class system which included the article and the personal pronouns in one class, so that the absence of a word form corresponding to the Greek article did not upset his classification.

In describing the morphology of the Latin verb, Priscian adopted