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普通语言学教程

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COURSE IN GENERAL LINGUISTICS

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[瑞士]费尔迪南·德·索绪尔 著

(一)

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Course In General Linguistics

By *Ferdinand De Saussure*

English Translation By

*Wade Baskin*

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# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I A Glance At The History Of Linguistics

The science that has been developed around the facts of language passed through three stages before finding its true and unique object.

First something called "grammar" was studied. This study, initiated by the Greeks and continued mainly by the French, was based on logic. It lacked a scientific approach and was detached from language itself. Its only aim was to give rules for distinguishing between correct and incorrect forms; it was a normative discipline, far removed from actual observation, and its scope was limited.

Next appeared philology. A "philological" school had existed much earlier in Alexandria, but this name is more often applied to the scientific movement which was started by Friedrich August Wolf in 1777 and which continues to this day. Language is not its sole object. The early philologists sought especially to correct, interpret and comment upon written texts. Their studies also led to an interest in literary history, customs, institutions, etc. They applied the methods of criticism for their own purposes. When they dealt with linguistic questions, it was for the express purpose of comparing texts of different periods, determining the language peculiar to each author, or deciphering and explaining

# 序 言

## 第一章 语言学历史回顾

关于语言事实研究的科学,在发现其真正的、唯一的对象之前,经历了三个阶段。

最初研究的是所谓的“语法”。这一研究以逻辑为基础,最先由希腊人开创,然后由法国人继承。它缺乏科学的研究方法,而且背离了语言本身。它的唯一目的就是制定区分正确和错误形式的规则;这是一门规定性的学科,和实际的观察相去甚远,其视野也很有限。

接着是语文学。“语文学”派早在亚历山大里亚就有,不过这一流派更多地是指由沃尔夫在1777年发起的科学研究运动,这一运动一直延续至今。语言并不是语文学研究的唯一对象。早期的语文学者更注重对书面文本进行考证、解释和评论。他们的研究还使他们对文学历史、习俗和制度等的研究产生了兴趣。他们运用各种批评方法来达到自己的目的。当他们碰到语言学的问题时,目的很明确,那就是比较不同时代的文本,不同作家的语言特点,或者解读和说明用古代晦涩

inscriptions made in an archaic or obscure language. Doubtless these investigations broke the ground for historical linguistics. Ritschl's studies of Plautus are actually linguistic. But philological criticism is still deficient on one point; it follows the written language too slavishly and neglects the living language. Moreover, it is concerned with little except Greek and Latin antiquity.

The third stage began when scholars discovered that languages can be compared with one another. This discovery was the origin of "comparative philology". In 1816, in a work entitled *Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache*, Franz Bopp compared Sanskrit with German, Greek, Latin, etc. Bopp was not the first to record their similarities and state that all these languages belong to a single family. That had been done before him, notably by the English orientalist W. Jones (died in 1794); but Jones' few isolated statements do not prove that the significance and importance of comparison had been generally understood before 1816. While Bopp cannot be credited with the discovery that Sanskrit is related to certain languages of Europe and Asia, he did realize that the comparison of related languages could become the subject matter of an independent science. To illuminate one language by means of another, to explain the forms of one through the forms of the other, that is what no one had done before him.

Whether Bopp could have created his science—so quickly at least—without the prior discovery of Sanskrit is doubtful. With Sanskrit as a third witness beside Latin and Greek, Bopp had a larger and firmer basis for his studies. Fortunately, Sanskrit was exceptionally well-fitted to the role of illuminating the comparison.

For example, a comparison of the paradigms of Latin *genus* (*genus, generis, genere, genera, generum, etc.*) and Greek (*génos, géneos, génei, génea, genéon, etc.*) reveals nothing. But the picture

难懂的语言写就的碑铭。这些研究无疑为历史语言学打好了根基。瑞兹耳关于普劳图斯的研究是真正意义上的语言学的。但是,语文学批评在有一点上仍有不足:它过分拘泥于书面语言,而忽视了活的语言。而且它关注的几乎全是希腊语和拉丁语这样的古董。

第三阶段始于学者们发现可以把语言进行相互比较之时。这一发现是“比较语文学”的起源。1816年,在一本名为《梵语动词变位系统》的书中,法朗兹·葆朴把梵语和日耳曼语、希腊语、拉丁语等进行了比较。但是第一个记录下各种语言的相似性并认为这些语言都属同一语系的人并不是法朗兹·葆朴。在他之前,英国的东方学家琼斯(逝世于1794年)就是这么认为的。但是,琼斯的一些孤立的陈述尚不足以证明1816年才被人们普遍认识的比较方法的意义和重要性。然而,葆朴虽然不能被证明发现了梵语同欧亚的某些语言有亲属关系,但他却认识到对有亲属关系的语言进行比较可以成为一门独立学科的研究内容。用一种语言说明另一种语言,用一种语言形式解释另一种语言形式,这是他之前的人不曾做过的。

如果不是发现了梵语,葆朴能否创立他自己的科学是值得怀疑的——至少可能不会创立得这么快。梵语作为除拉丁语和希腊语以外的第三种证据,使葆朴的研究根基更广泛、更牢固。幸运的是,梵语又特别适合用来说明这种比较关系。

比方说,拉丁语 *genus* (种类) 的变格 (*genus, generic, genere, genera, generum* 等等), 与希腊词 *génos* (种类) 的变格 (*génos, géneos, génei, génea, genéōn*, 等等) 的比较可能说明不了什么。



changes as soon as we add the corresponding Sanskrit series ( *śanas*, *śanasas*, *śanasi*, *śanasu*, *śanasām*, etc. ). A glance reveals the similarity between the Greek forms and the Latin forms. If we accept tentatively the hypothesis that *śanas* represents the primitive state—and this step facilitates explanation—then we conclude that *s* must have fallen in Greek forms wherever it occurred between two vowels. Next we conclude that *s* became *r* in Latin under the same conditions. Grammatically, then, the Sanskrit paradigm exemplifies the concept of radical, a unit ( *śanas* ) that is quite definite and stable. Latin and Greek had the same forms as Sanskrit only in their earlier stages. Here Sanskrit is instructive precisely because it has preserved all the Indo-European *s*'s. Of course Sanskrit failed in other respects to preserve the features of the prototype; for instance, it had completely revolutionized the vocalic system. But in general the original elements that Sanskrit has preserved are remarkably helpful in research—and fate decreed that it was to clarify many points in the study of other languages.

Other distinguished linguists soon added to the contribution of Bopp: Jacob Grimm, the founder of Germanic studies ( his *Deutsche Grammatik* was published from 1822 to 1836 ); Pott, whose etymological studies made a considerable amount of material available to linguists; Kuhn, whose works dealt with both linguistics and comparative mythology; the Indic scholars Benfey and Aufrecht, etc.

Finally, among the last representatives of the school, Max Müller, G. Curtius, and August Schleicher deserve special attention. In different ways, all three did much to advance comparative studies. Max Müller popularized them in his brilliant discussions ( *Lessons in the Science of Language*, 1861 ); but his failing was a certain lack of conscientiousness. Curtius, a distinguished philologist known especially for his *Grundzüge der griechischen Etymologie* ( 1879 ), was one of the first to reconcile comparative philology with classical philology.