

29 / 教育部师范教育司组织编写  
中学教师进修高等师范本科(专科起点)教材

总主审 秦秀白

专升本

H10-44

1/29

# 语言学概论

## *Introducing Linguistics*

杨 忠 主编



高等教育出版社

# 前 言

《语言学概论》是为中学英语教师进修本科课程和英语专业本科生编写的教材,旨在帮助读者掌握现代语言学的基本概念、基本理论、基本方法,引发对语言本质、语言学习过程和语言教学原理的思考。

21 世纪,世界经济一体化的趋势必然带来国际交流与合作的新局面。英语作为国际交流的通用语言越来越受到社会各界的重视。英语(作为外语)教学在我国学历教育、职业教育、继续教育中占有前所未有的地位。从 2001 年起,县级以上城市的小学普遍开始开设英语课程。大规模、高效率的英语教学是以高水平、专业化的英语教师培养、培训为基础的。听、说、读、写、译技能是从事英语教学必须具备的,但不是英语教师职业化培训的全部。外语教学是由政府决策、专家策划、教师操作、社会评价构成的系统工程。教师直接面临的问题是怎么教。然而,教无定法,教师需要根据教育目标、教学对象、教学内容、教学设备等诸多因素创造性地设计课程步骤。教师不仅要考虑怎么教,还必须考虑为什么教,教什么。语言教师应该知道语言是什么,语言是由什么构成的,是如何发挥作用的,是如何习得的。语言学研究成果对语言教师颇有启发。外语教学法是语言理论与教学实践结合的产物。有语言理论知识外语教师才能深入理解教学大纲和课程标准,才能驾驭教材,才能创造性地组织课堂教学,提高教学效果。

语言学的研究领域广泛,派别林立,术语繁多,合理地取舍是编好语言学概论的基础。本书以介绍现代英语语言学的基本理论、方法和前沿问题、最新成果为主要目的,全书由三部分构成。第一部分(第一章)概述语言的本质、功能、分类、起源和语言学的对象、性质、分支。第二部分(第二~七章)介绍语言的分相研究,即语音学、音位学、形态学、句法学、语义学、语用学。第三部分(第八~十章)介绍语言的交叉学科研究,即社会语言学、第二语言习得、语言学与外语教学。为了便于读者消化理解语言理论,掌握语言分析的基本方法,每章后附辅导题和研究课题。书后附辅导题参考题解和英汉术语表。

根据《中学教师进修高等师范本科(专科起点)教学计划》(试行)对本课教学课时的规定和本教材各章内容的难易度,建议师生在使用教材时参考如下课时分配方案:

教学内容	课 时 分 配				
	脱产	业余	函 授		
			面授	自学	合计
第一章	6	6	3	5	8
第二章	4	4	2	4	6
第三章	4	4	2	4	6
第四章	4	4	2	3	5
第五章	9	9	4	8	12
第六章	9	9	3	9	12
第七章	6	6	2	6	8
第八章	4	4	2	3	5
第九章	4	4	2	3	5
第十章	4	4	2	3	5
合 计	54	54	24	48	72

本书在编写过程中得到高等教育出版社和一些同行专家的支持。秦秀白教授等对编写提纲和编写原则提出了宝贵意见。东北师范大学美籍专家 John David McGirt 审阅了书稿。在此一并表示感谢。

由于时间仓促，编者水平所限，书中定有疏漏和不足之处，欢迎读者和同行指正。

编 者

2001年9月10日

# Contents

---

<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>Language and Linguistics: an Overview</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	What is language?	1
1.2	Features of human language	2
1.3	Functions of language	5
1.4	Types of language	6
1.4.1	Natural languages and artificial languages	
1.4.2	Genetic classification of languages	
1.4.3	The typological classification of languages	
1.5	The myth of language: language origin	8
1.6	Linguistics: the scientific study of language	9
1.6.1	Linguistics as a science	
1.6.2	Branches of linguistics	
1.6.3	Features of modern linguistics	
	TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	13
	MINI-PROJECTS	13
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>Phonetics: the Study of Speech Sounds</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1	The study of speech sounds	14
2.2	The sound-producing mechanism	14
2.3	Phonetic transcription of speech sounds	16
2.3.1	Unit of representation	
2.3.2	Phonetic symbols	
2.4	Description of English consonants	17
2.5	Description of English vowels	19
2.6	Phonetic features and natural classes	21
	TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	22
	MINI-PROJECTS	23



<b>CHAPTER 3 Phonology: the Study of Sound Systems and Patterns</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 The study of sound systems and patterns	24
3.2 Phonemes and allophones	24
3.3 Discovering phonemes	25
3.3.1 Contrastive distribution	
3.3.2 Complementary distribution	
3.3.3 Free variation	
3.3.4 The discovery procedure	
3.4 Distinctive features and non-distinctive features	27
3.5 Phonological rules	28
3.6 Syllable structure	29
3.7 Sequence of phonemes	30
3.8 Features above segments	31
3.8.1 Stress	
3.8.2 Intonation	
3.8.3 Tone	
3.8.4 The functioning of stress and intonation in English	
TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	33
MINI-PROJECTS	35
 <b>CHAPTER 4 Morphology: the Study of Word Structure</b>	 <b>36</b>
4.1 Words and word structure	36
4.2 Morpheme: the minimal meaningful unit of language	36
4.3 Classification of morphemes	37
4.3.1 Free and bound morphemes	
4.3.2 Inflectional and derivational morphemes	
4.4 Formation of English words	38
4.4.1 Derivation	
4.4.2 Compounding	
4.4.3 Other types of English word formation	
TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	43
MINI-PROJECTS	44
 <b>CHAPTER 5 Syntax: the Analysis of Sentence Structure</b>	 <b>45</b>
5.1 Grammaticality	45

5.2	Knowledge of sentence structure	46
5.3	Different approaches to syntax	47
5.4	Transformational-generative grammar (TG)	49
5.4.1	The goal of a TG grammar	
5.4.2	Syntactic categories	
5.4.3	Phrase structure rules	
5.4.4	Tree diagrams	
5.4.5	Recursion and the infinitude of language	
5.4.6	Sub-categorization of the lexicon	
5.4.7	Transformational rules	
5.5	Systemic-functional grammar	60
5.5.1	Two perspectives of syntactic analysis: chain and choice	
5.5.2	The three metafunctions	
5.5.3	Transitivity: syntactic structure as representation of experience	
5.5.4	Mood and modality: syntactic structure as representation of interaction	
5.5.5	Theme and rheme: syntactic structure as organization of message	
	TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	69
	MINI-PROJECTS	72

## **CHAPTER 6 Semantics: the Analysis of Meaning**

73

6.1	The study of meaning	73
6.2	Reference and sense	74
6.2.1	Reference	
6.2.2	Sense	
6.3	Classification of lexical meanings	75
6.3.1	Referential meaning and associative meaning	
6.3.2	Types of associative meaning	
6.4	Lexical sense relations	77
6.4.1	Synonymy	
6.4.2	Antonymy	
6.4.3	Homonymy	
6.4.4	Polysemy	
6.4.5	Hyponymy	
6.5	Describing lexical meaning: componential analysis	80
6.6	Words and concepts	81



6.6.1	Categorization	
6.6.2	Prototypes	
6.6.3	Hierarchies	
6.7	Semantic relations of sentences	83
6.8	Metaphors	85
6.8.1	From rhetorical device to cognitive device	
6.8.2	The components of metaphors	
6.8.3	Features of metaphors	
	TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	89
	MINI-PROJECTS	92
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<b>Pragmatics: the Analysis of Meaning in Context</b>	<b>93</b>
7.1	The pragmatic analysis of meaning	93
7.2	Deixis and reference	94
7.3	Speech acts	96
7.4	Cooperation and implicature	98
7.5	The politeness principle	99
7.6	The principle of relevance	101
7.7	Conversational structure	103
	TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	106
	MINI-PROJECTS	107
<b>CHAPTER 8</b>	<b>Language in Social Contexts</b>	<b>108</b>
8.1	Sociolinguistic study of language	108
8.2	Varieties of a language	108
8.3	Grades of formality	111
8.4	Languages in contact	112
8.5	Taboos and euphemisms	113
8.6	Language and culture	114
8.7	Communicative competence	116
	TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	117
	MINI-PROJECTS	117
<b>CHAPTER 9</b>	<b>Second Language Acquisition</b>	<b>118</b>
9.1	What is second language acquisition?	118

---

9.2 Factors affecting SLA	119
9.3 Analyzing learners' language	122
9.4 Explaining second language acquisition	124
TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	127
MINI-PROJECTS	128

<b>CHAPTER 10 Linguistics and Foreign Language Teaching</b>	<b>129</b>
---	------------

10.1 Foreign language teaching as a system	129
10.2 Contribution of linguistics: applications and implications	131
10.3 Linguistic underpinning of syllabus design	132
10.4 Method as integration of theory and practice	133
10.5 Linguistics in the professional development of language teachers	136
TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES / QUESTIONS	137
MINI-PROJECTS	139

<b>Appendix I Families / Groups of Languages</b>	<b>140</b>
--	------------

<b>Appendix II The Indo-European Language Family</b>	<b>142</b>
--	------------

<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>144</b>
---------------------	------------

<b>Suggested Solutions to Tutorial Questions</b>	<b>148</b>
--	------------

<b>An English-Chinese Glossary</b>	<b>156</b>
------------------------------------	------------



## Language and Linguistics an Overview

### 1.1 What is language?

**W**e use language in most of our waking life (and sometimes in dreams, too). Language is so indispensable to us that we all tend to take it for granted. Few of us ever think about what it is that allows us to talk about everything in the universe and our inner world, to do things together with others. As a learner of English as a foreign language, have you ever thought about the nature of the subject that you learn through painstaking effort? As a professional English teacher, have you ever pondered at the nature of the subject you teach?

Probing into this question, one may understand the multi faceted nature of language. Language is many things indeed: a medium of communication, a system of code, a carrier of culture, an instrument for thinking, a glue of a community, a social institution, etc. This multi-faceted nature of language explains the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of language. Linguists must face up to this question, as language is the object of study in their research. Hundreds of definitions have been proposed in the past. Here, we just cite a few for discussion.

Language is a system whose parts can and must be considered in their synchronic solidarity. (de Saussure, 1916)

[Languages is] a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. (Chomsky, 1957)

Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. (Sapir, 1921)

Each of these definitions pinpoints some aspects of the essence of language, but all have left out something.

In broad terms, linguists agree to define language as **a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication** (Wardhaugh, 1977). This definition is based on a number of theoretical assumptions. Defined as such, language is seen as unique to human beings. In other words, it is assumed that only human beings have language. Animal communication systems (bird chips, bee dances, dog barks, and so on) are all excluded. Is this justified? Are communication systems possessed by other creatures qualitatively different from human languages?

## **1.2 Features of human language**

**M**any philosophers and linguists believe that language is unique to man. Language is a human trait that sets us apart from other living creatures. They spell out a number of features of language which are not found in animal communication systems.

### **(i) Creativity / Productivity**

Creativity is the first and foremost striking feature of human language. It refers to the fact that language provides opportunities for sending messages that have never been sent before and for understanding novel messages. The grammatical rules and the words of a language are finite, but the sentences are infinite. Every speaker uses language creatively. Even a child acquiring his / her mother tongue can put speech sounds and words into novel combinations to express meanings. This feature is not found in animal communication systems. Talking birds such as parrots can imitate human utterances, but they cannot segment the sounds and the words in the phrases they imitate and put them in a different sequence.

Results of experiments show that even animals closest in kin to human beings cannot match children in learning and using language. In the 1930s, Winthrop and Luella Kellogg raised their infant son together with an infant chimpanzee named Gua. When the boy could understand *I say what I mean* and *I mean what I say*, Gua could understand neither, although it understood some words. Several decades later, another chimpanzee, named Nim Chimsky (after the famous American linguist Noam Chomsky, who states that language is unique to human beings) was taught American Sign Language, under careful experimental conditions, including record keeping and video taping. After analyzing the video tapes of Nim's conversations, the researchers found that only 12% of Nim's utterances were spontaneous, and of the 88% where the teacher initiated signing, half of Nim's responses were imitations of the teacher's utterance. Children initiate conversations more and more frequently as they grow older. Children hardly ever imitate in conversation. Children become increasingly *creative* in

their language use, but Nim and other chimpanzees in similar experiments showed almost no tendency toward such creativity (Fromkin and Rodman, 1998). Facts like these seem to suggest that *creativity* is a feature that distinguishes human language from communication systems of other creatures.

### (ii) Duality

Language contains two subsystems, one of sounds and the other of meanings. If you are given the four English speech sounds [p] [l] [i] [d] and asked to combine them into sequences that sound like English words, you will find [plid] [pild] are permissible, while \*[pdli] \*[dpli] \*[lipd] \*[idlp], etc. are not. The permissible sequences sound like English words, and yet they are not, because they do not stand for anything. On the other hand, meanings are conveyed by certain speech sounds or sequences of speech sounds. In English, [DEAD BODY OF A PERSON] is expressed by the word *corpse*. In this case, we say the concept or the meaning is lexicalized. In English there is no word to stand for the concept [DEAD PLANT]. When certain speech sounds correspond to a certain meaning, a unit of language arises. The same sounds can be recombined to mean something else. In some cases, the same sequence of sounds can mean different things (such as homophones, and polysemes). This shows that meanings and sounds make up two subsystems of language. No systems of animal communication possess this feature. The barks of a dog are not analyzable. Animal communication systems cannot be cut into segments and then be reorganized into meaningful sequences. In other words, human languages are discrete while animal communication systems are non-discrete.

### (iii) Arbitrariness

The relationship between speech sounds and the meanings they represent in the languages of the world is, for the most part, an arbitrary one. The Swiss linguist de Saussure regarded the linguistic sign as composed of signifier (sound image) and signified (referent). In his view, there is no inherent relation between the two. A building we live in with our family is called *house* in English, *maison* in French, *dom* in Russian, *casa* in Spanish. If the relationship between speech sounds and meanings were motivated (i.e., not arbitrary), the words in these languages that stand for the same thing would sound the same or similar, then people would not need to learn foreign languages.

Admittedly, there are a few words in most languages that are onomatopoeic — words of which the sounds supposedly imitate the sounds of nature. This seems to contradict arbitrariness. Nevertheless, when these words of different languages are compared, it is found that they still sound different. The English word *tick tock* is equivalent to the Chinese word *dida*, *buzz* to

wengweng. In English, *cockadoodledoo* represents the rooster's crow, but in Russian, *kukareku*, both are different from the Chinese expression. Based on these observations, we can say that all human languages are conventional. Most animal communications are iconic. A bee dance, for example, rather directly represents its subject matter, because a direct connection exists between the number and direction of the gyrations and the sources of nectar.

#### **(iv) Displacement**

Language can be used to refer to things real or imagined, past, present or future. When we listen to news broadcast, we know what has happened far and wide in the world. What can be spoken is not limited by time and space, while animals can merely communicate about what happens here and now. The cleverest dog cannot bark to tell others how badly its parents were treated by their owner. This feature of language is due to the fact that the human brain is specially structured for language and that the brains of other species are not comparable in terms of the capacities of memory and abstraction.

#### **(v) Cultural transmission**

Language is not merely genetically transmitted from generation to generation. Children pick up their mother tongue in the process of socialization. Animal communication systems are genetically transmitted. Admittedly, the capacity for language has a genetic basis, but the particular language a person acquires or learns is a cultural fact, not a biological fact. As language is arbitrary and conventional, a child can only acquire his mother tongue through interacting with people around him.

#### **(vi) Interchangeability**

All members of a speech community can send and receive messages. This is obviously true of all human languages, but not of all animal communication systems. Bee dances are not interchangeable; only foragers send messages. Nor are songs of many birds; only roosters crow.

#### **(vii) Reflexivity**

Human languages can be used to describe themselves. The language used to talk about language is called *metalanguage*. When linguists write grammars or lexicographers compile dictionaries they must use metalanguage. When we teach languages as a subject we also have to use it. No evidence exists that suggests that any other species write grammars or compile dictionaries or teach the communication system to outsiders.

Linguists have observed other characteristics, but the ones discussed above are more striking, particularly the first two. These are universal features possessed by all human languages. Although some animal communication systems possess, to a very limited degree,

one or another of these features except *creativity* and *duality*, none is found to have all the features. On this basis linguists tend to conclude that human languages are qualitatively different from animal communication systems. Therefore, the foregoing definition of language seems to be valid.

### 1.3 Functions of language

The above two sections discuss what language is and what are the characteristics of human languages. To understand what language is we will naturally think about what language does. *Function* is the term used to discuss the question, but the word is often used in different senses in the literature.

The word *function* is used by some grammarians to refer to *organic* or *constitutive* functions of linguistic units. In this case, function means “a unit’s ‘privilege of occurrence’, in terms of its position, mobility, optionality, etc, in the unit of which it is a constituent.” (Quirk et al, 1985:48) Units which may appear in the same slot in the sentence have the same syntactic function.

- (1) It has been very cold *recently*.
- (2) It has been very cold *this month*.
- (3) It has been very cold *during the past two weeks*.

The italicized parts of (1), (2), (3) are functionally equivalent, for the substitution does not harm the grammaticality of the sentences.

“Function” is generally used in linguistics to refer to the roles language plays in our life or in society. Even in this sense, “function” may refer to specific roles or general roles.

The specific roles language plays fulfill an individual’s purpose of communication. *Speech functions* may be an accurate term for this kind of roles. When someone steps on an English speaker’s toes, he / she will utter “Ouch!” almost instinctively. Football fans sometimes cannot help, during the match, shouting to cheer the team, or even swearing at a player or the umpire. In these and many other similar cases, language helps to relieve the nervous / physical energy. It plays an emotive or expressive function. Linguists have tried to generalize speech functions and classify them into several types. The list is hardly exhaustive.

The general roles language plays are termed **metafunctions**. A metafunction is a more abstract one, which is capable of describing innumerable specific functions. According to M.A.K. Halliday (1970), language plays three metafunctions simultaneously.



### **(i) The ideational function**

When we use language to identify things, to think, or to record information, we use language as a symbolic code to represent the world around us. Playing this function, language serves as a medium that links a person with the world. Everything in mind exists through language. The ideational function is, then, the function language plays in human cognition, in our conceptualization of the world. It is this function of language, in a sense, that brings the world into our mind.

### **(ii) The interpersonal function**

In addition to using language to conceptualize the world, we use it as a medium to get along in a community. We use it to identify ourselves and others, to soothe or anger someone, to argue with or to convince others, to thank or to apologize to somebody, and more importantly, to get things done together with others or by others. This function of language binds individuals together. With this function language is able to glue all members of a speech community.

### **(iii) The textual function**

In using language, we organize messages in a logical way so that they fit in with the other messages and with the wider context in which we are talking or writing. When we speak or write we usually don't confine ourselves to single phrases or sentences; we string them together to form a text. There are expressions that refer backwards and forwards, or substitute for others, or link phrases or sentences. They play the role of bringing units of language into unity.

## **1.4 Types of language**

### **1.4.1 Natural languages and artificial languages**

A natural language is one that is the mother tongue of an ethnic community. It is estimated that there are about 4 000 natural languages in the world. The uncertainty is due to various factors. Firstly, new peoples, and therefore languages, continue to be discovered in the unexplored regions of the world. Secondly, a language may die — there are no longer native speakers of the language. This is happening to languages of smaller communities of the world. Thirdly, the distinction between language and dialect is not always clear-cut.

Among natural languages in the world, some have achieved special status due to historical reasons and are chosen as official languages. Latin used to be a medium of education in

Western Europe throughout the middle ages, and French the language of international diplomacy from the 17th to the 20th century. Today, English is the (an) official language of over 40 countries. It tops the list of official languages, with an estimated population of 1 400 million English speakers. Natural languages that are used to break the barrier of communication between nations are called world *lingua francas*.

Before world *lingua francas* were used, people used to desire a universal language. The desire led to the invention of artificial languages — languages which are specially invented to facilitate international communication. The idea began to flourish in the 17th century. Since then a number of artificial languages have been invented, among which Esperanto still exists today. It was created by a Polish oculist, Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof (1859 – 1917). The scheme was first published in Russian, using the pseudonym “Doktoro Esperanto” (Doctor Hopeful). Although Esperanto is taught in some schools and universities and some journals are published in it, the artificial language is still yet to be accepted as an international language.

#### **1.4.2 Genetic classification of languages**

Genetic (or genealogical) classification, one of the two main ways of classification, is based on the assumption that languages have diversified from a common ancestor. It uses early remains as evidence, and deductions are made to reconstruct the parent language when no written remains can be found. This approach has been widely used in Europe in the 19th century. The outcome is the establishment of language families, the names of which generally indicate their geographical distributions.

The Indo-European family is one of the largest families. Languages of this family are the ones that first spread throughout Europe and many parts of southern Asia. Their parent language “Proto-Indo-European” is believed to have been spoken before 3000 BC, and to have split up into different languages during the subsequent millennium. The family has now split up into nearly 10 divisions. English belongs to the West Germanic division (See Appendix II for the divisions of Indo-European family and the daughter languages).

Other language families and their geographical distributions are shown in Appendix I. Most of the world’s languages can be grouped into families by the comparative methods. However, there are language isolates, the ones which have no known historical connection with any language.

#### **1.4.3 The typological classification of languages**

This is the other of the two main ways of classifying languages. It is based on a comparison

of the formal similarities or differences which exist between languages. It is an attempt to group languages into structural types, on the basis of phonology, morphology and syntax.

Phonologically, languages can be grouped in terms of how they use speech sounds — how many and what kinds of vowels they have, whether they use tones, and so on. Chinese, for example, is a tone language, while English is not.

Morphologically, languages can be classified on the basis of the way words are constructed. Some European linguists in the 19th century recognized three main types: (1) analytic (isolating) languages, such as Chinese and Vietnamese; (2) synthetic (inflecting) languages, with Latin, Greek and Arabic as clear cases; (3) agglutinating languages, Turkish, Japanese and Swahili, for example. In type (1), there are no inflections or formal changes; grammatical relationships are shown through word order. In type (2), grammatical relationships are expressed by changing the internal structure of the words, typically by changing the inflectional endings. In type (3), words are built out of a long sequence of units, with each unit expressing a particular grammatical meaning.

Syntactically, languages can also be classified by observing their word order in the sentence, that is, whether the word order is fixed or free and what kind of order is favored. The three basic elements of the sentence, the subject, the predicate (verb) and the object can be arranged in six different orders: (1) SVO, (2) SOV, (3) VSO, (4) VOS, (5) OVS, (6) OSV. The most frequent word orders found in languages of the world are (1), (2), and (3), in which the subject precedes the object. It is observed that the order of other sentence components is most frequently correlated with the order of the three main components. If a language is basically a SVO language, then the auxiliary verb tends to precede the verb; adverbs tend to follow the verb; and the language utilizes prepositions. English, as an example of SVO languages, exhibits all the three tendencies.

Although languages in the world are diversified, they are also remarkably similar in many ways. The similarities provide essential data for the study of universality of language. This will be shown in the following chapters.

## **1.5 The myth of language: language origin**

**H**ow did language arise? The inherent difficulty in answering the question lies in the fact that there is no evidence which suggests language origin. Anthropologists believe that man has existed for millions of years. But the earliest deciphered written records are barely 6 000 years. The archeological discoveries of writing systems provide no clue to the



origin of language. Writing, as the visual representation of language, has a much shorter history. Our ancestors spoke long before they wrote. Among the thousands of languages in the world today, only a few hundreds of them have written form. Because of the problem of verification, scholars in the latter part of the 19th century, who were only interested in “hard science”, ignored or even banned discussions of language origin. In 1886, the Linguistic Society of Paris passed a resolution to ban any papers on the subject.

Wherever scientific knowledge is lacking there are religious interpretations. Many religions and mythologies contain stories of language origin. According to Christian beliefs, God gave Adam the power to name all things. Whatever Adam called everything God created, that was the name thereof. Interpreted in this way, language was God’s gift to mankind. Scientific interpretations hold that language is human invention. The Bow-wow theory sees primitive language as an imitation of natural sounds, such as the cries of animals, like *quack*, *cuckoo*. The Pooh-pooh theory argues that language arose from instinctive emotional cries, expressive of pain or joy. The Yo-he-ho theory envisages language arising from the noises made by a group of men engaged in joint labor or effort — lifting a huge hunted game, moving a rock, etc. The evolution theory, proposed by Darwin and favored by Engles, holds that language is a product of evolutionary development of the human species. Language originated in the process of labor. It is human invention, and dialectically, it, together with labor, makes us human.

The fundamental difference between a religious belief and a scientific theory is whether it is verifiable. When a disciple believes in a religion he / she never questions its doctrines. A Christian, for example, would not try to prove whether God exists. Scientists, however, need to find evidence to support what they believe is true. More research is clearly needed in the attempt to resolve the mystery of language origin. Many biologists, psychologists, physiologists and neurologists have been working along the line of the evolution theory. The more that is known about the anatomy and functioning of the human brain, the clearer we may be about language origin.

## **1.6 Linguistics: the scientific study of language**

### **1.6.1 Linguistics as a science**

“Linguistics may be defined as the scientific study of language” (Lyons, 1968: 1). This definition is well accepted because it succinctly pinpoints the object and methods of linguistics as a discipline.