

DICTIONARY
OF
LINGUISTICS

Mario Pei and Frank Gaynor

A
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OF
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Preface

Grammatical terminology, based upon the prescriptive principles of Classical grammarians and the well-defined structure of the Indo-European languages, has been traditional since the days of ancient Greece.

The largely historical linguistic discipline evolved in the course of the 19th century led to the creation of a considerable body of terms used to describe changes of a diachronic nature.

It remained for the 20th century, with its emphasis upon synchronic, descriptive and structural linguistics, to evolve another, abundant terminology which is, even at the present moment, in a state of flux, with new terms being created and existing terms being either discarded or redefined and reinterpreted.

There is obvious need for a work of reference that will present, with simplified definitions, at least the more commonly used and accessible terms in vogue among those who devote themselves to linguistic pursuits.

Accordingly, the editors have endeavored to compile a dictionary that will include:

a) the general run of traditional grammatical terms, even though they already appear in standard dictionaries and works of reference;

b) the more frequently used terminology of the field of historical linguistics, as it is used in the manuals of the last century and a half;

c) that portion of the terminology of modern descriptive linguistics concerning which there is some measure of agreement among its users;

d) the names, affiliations, and very brief descriptions of the major languages and dialects of the world, both past and present.

This work makes no pretense whatsoever of being either definitive or exhaustive. The field of linguistic terminology changes

from day to day, and new terms are continually being coined and introduced. The definitions themselves are far from exhaustive, since the ramifications of many terms would call for treatment in an encyclopedia rather than a dictionary of linguistics. It is expected that numerous revisions will be in order from time to time; therefore the editors earnestly request that reviewers and users of this volume will call to their attention omissions and inaccuracies, and voice suggestions for desiderata and addenda.

At the same time, it is expected that this work will serve a very useful practical purpose. Being, for the present, the only one of its kind in the English language, it will be a handy work of reference for students and workers in the allied fields of grammar and language study, philology and historical linguistics, phonetics, phonemics and structural linguistics. Here, for the first time, gathered in one handy volume, will be found definitions of terms which have heretofore appeared in scattered books and in the pages of many different linguistic periodicals.

The teacher of modern or Classical languages who has been puzzled by the use of certain terms occasionally appearing in the writings of the specialists will find here at least a partial interpretation of those terms. The philologist whose terminology was derived mainly from Leskien, Brugmann, Hirt, Meillet and Meyer-Lübke will be able to trace some of the usages of his descriptive colleagues, while the latter, who in their enthusiasm for a newly developed field have largely neglected the older works, will be able to refresh their memories. All will be aided by finding in a single volume brief scientific descriptions of little-known languages whose names keep appearing in the literature of the linguistic field.

The editors wish to express their heartfelt appreciation to all those who have aided them in their work, and in particular to Professor Urban T. Holmes, Jr., of the University of North Carolina, who went over the entire manuscript in proof and offered many valuable comments and suggestions, and to Dr. Eugene Dorfman of the Department of General and Comparative Linguistics of Columbia University, who contributed the major portion of the entries dealing with the recent terminological innovations of the descriptive-structuralist school of linguistics.

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A

Abakan: An Asiatic language; a member of the Eastern Turkic group of the Altaic sub-family of the Ural-Altaic family of languages.

abbreviation: (1) A short written symbol for a full word or expression (*etc.* for *et cetera*; *e.g.* for *exempli gratia*, meaning *for example*).—(2) A synonym for *shortening* (q.v.).

aberrant: Deviating from the normal or average.

abessive: A Finno-Ugric declensional case, having the same connotation as the English preposition *without*.

Abkaz: A language (also referred to as *Abkhasian*) spoken in the Caucasus; a member of the Western branch of the North Caucasian family of languages.

Abkhasian: See *Abkaz*.

ablative: That case of a noun, adjective, pronoun or numeral denoting the source, agent or means, occasionally also time or place, of an act or occurrence. (In Latin, also used after certain prepositions.)

ablative absolute: A Latin grammatical construction, consisting of the ablative case of a noun or nouns or pronoun or pronouns and an adjective or participle which have no grammatical connection with the rest of the sentence in which the expression as a unit constitutes an interpolated entity.

ablaut: A vowel gradation (q.v.), characteristic of Indo-European languages, denoting distinctions in meaning (e.g., different tenses of a verb).—Also called *apophony*.

abnormal vowel: A designation applied in English phonetical terminology to a vowel representing an intermediate sound between a front and a back vowel. (E.g., the German *ö* [ø], the

French *u* [y], the vowel sound in the English word *but* [ʌ], etc.)

abridged clause: A clause without a finite verb form, such as an infinitive or participial clause.

Abruzzese-Neapolitan: A generic term for a group of south Italian dialects spoken in southern Latium, Abruzzi, Campania, Lucania and Puglia, and generally characterized by loss of clarity of the final vowels and umlaut distinctions in the root vowels.

absolute: Considered in and for itself (e.g., *absolute form*), or constituting a self-sufficient entity (e.g., *absolute ablative*).

absolute ablative: See *ablative absolute*.

absolute adjective: An adjective used as a substantive. (E.g., "The meek shall inherit the earth.")

absolute case: The case in which a noun is said to be when it is the subject of a sentence but is grammatically isolated from the other sentence-elements. (E.g., in Japanese, this case is usually formed by placing the particle *wa* after the noun.)

absolute construction: A construction no element or part of which is linked grammatically to the rest of the sentence. (E.g., *absolute ablative*.)

absolute form: The basic, uninflected, phonetically and morphologically unchanged form of a word as it appears when detached from context, i.e., when spoken alone. (Cf. *sandhi-form*.)

absolute position: In phonetics, the position had by a word, phrase or another linguistic form (q.v.) when it constitutes a sentence without being a part of a larger linguistic form.

absolute superlative: A superlative used to denote a high degree of a quality, without indicating or implying comparison.

absorption: The suppression of a sound or its incorporation into an immediately following or preceding sound.

abstract noun: A noun denoting a quality or characteristic in general.

abstract term: In general, any term, word or expression which

denotes a notion, concept, idea, in contradistinction to a *concrete term* (q.v.).

accent: (1) The *stress* (q.v.) with which a certain syllable of a given word is pronounced, in comparison with the other syllables of the same word.—(2) Short for *accent mark* or *written accent* (see *diacritic mark*).—(3) Cf. *pitch*.

accentuation: The laying of vocal stress on certain parts of a word or phrase. Graff calls it "accent as a flowing feature of speech."

accidence: (1) The inflectional changes of words, to denote various cases, tenses, numbers, etc. of the same word. —(2) That branch of grammar which treats of these changes.

accommodation: The partial assimilation (q.v.) of a phoneme, in which the assimilated phoneme takes over just one of the characteristics of the assimilatory phoneme.

accommodative aspect: See *benefactive aspect*.

accusative: In Indo-European languages, that case of a noun, adjective, pronoun or numeral denoting that the word in question is the object of the sentence. (Also used after certain prepositions.)

Achaean: One of the western dialects of ancient Greek.

acoustic: Relating to sound and sound perception.

acoustic features: The features of sound in any given utterance, as they are or may be recorded experimentally. (Also called *gross acoustic features*.) These features may have a bearing on meaning and thus be essential to communication by speech (*distinctive* acoustic features) or have no bearing on meaning and clarity of communication (*non-distinctive*).

acoustic phonetics: The study of the sound-waves produced when sounds are uttered. A branch of *experimental* or *laboratory phonetics*.

acrophonic writing: A method of writing, employing signs which were originally *ideographs* (q.v.) but have come to be phonetic signs, representing the initial sound of the object which they depict.

acrophony: The employment of the pictorial representation of an

object as the phonetic sign of the initial sound or syllable of the name of that object.

action noun: Any noun naming an action.

active case: See *ergative case*.

active verb: (1) A transitive verb (q.v.).—(2) A verb used in the active voice (q.v.).

active voice: The conjugational form denoting that the grammatical subject of the sentence is the performer of the action expressed by the verb.

actor-action-goal: The sequence of forms in languages like English where word order normally indicates or marks grammatical relationships; compare 'The man bit the dog' and 'The dog bit the man', where the action remains the same, though the meaning is reversed, since actors and goals have changed position.

actualization: The perceptible result of the articulation of the phonemic variants or of the *archiphoneme* (q.v.). Also called *realization*.

acute accent: The diacritic mark ['], placed over a vowel to indicate the correct sound in pronunciation; occasionally used (e.g., in Spanish) as a mere orthographic mark, without affecting the pronunciation, or to indicate the accented syllable.

adaptation theory: The theory that flexional endings originally were stem formatives. (*Ludwig*)

additive clause: A clause which adds something to the main clause, without modifying or restricting the idea expressed in the latter.

adessive: A Finno-Ugric declensional case, having the same denotation as the English preposition *at* or *near*.

adherent adjective: Attributive adjective (q.v.).

aditive case: In Basque, a declensional case, having the same denotation as the English preposition *toward*.

adjectival clause, etc.: See *adjective clause*, etc.

adjective: A word used to describe, qualify or modify a substantive.

adjective clause: A clause that is used, in the same manner as an adjective, to modify a substantive.

adjective numeral: A numeral used as an adjective.

adjunct word: A modifier.

adnominal: Relating or belonging to a noun.

adstratum: A term used occasionally, especially in Romance linguistics, as a synonym of *superstratum* (q.v.).

adverb: A word which modifies a verb or adjective or another adverb.

adverbial: Having the nature or function of an adverb.

adverbial clause: A clause that is used, in the same manner as an adverb, to modify a verb, adjective or adverb.

adverbial expression: Two or more words which, as a unit, have the function of an adverb.

adverbial modifier: Any word, group of words, or sentence, which modifies a verb, an adjective or an adverb.

adversative conjunction: A dissociative conjunction (q.v.) serving to express a contrast. (E.g., *but*.)

Adyghe: A language-group of the Western Caucasian branch of the North Caucasian family of languages; it comprises Circassian (or Cherkess) and Qabardi.

Aequian: One of the extinct dialects of the Sabellian branch of the Italic group of the Indo-European family of languages.

affinity: With reference to language, structural similarities or analogies which converge from different origins. The term has been used also to mean "common origin."

affirmative conjunction: A conjunction (q.v.) serving to introduce a word or word-group or clause which adds to or confirms the meaning of a previous word or word-group or clause.

affix: A collective term for *prefixes*, *suffixes* and *infixes* (q.v.).

affricate: In phonetical terminology, a sound articulated as a *stop* (q.v.) with a sharp homorganic fricative release. (Also called *semi-plosive*.)

Afghan: An alternative name of the *Pushtu* (q.v.) language.

Afghan Mongol: A near-extinct member of the Mongol branch of the Altaic sub-family of the Ural-Altaic family of languages.

African: A collective designation of the three families of languages

spoken in Africa: Sudanese-Guinean, Bantu, Hottentot-Bushman.

Afrikaans: A Dutch dialect, characterized by great simplicity of grammatical forms, spoken in the Union of South Africa.

age and area theory: A theory propounded by Bartoli in 1928, setting forth and explaining the influence and effects of submerged linguistic substrata and of the speech habits of neighboring, co-existent language areas and speech communities on a given language.

agent: The doer of an action; the person or thing performing or responsible for the performance of the action expressed by the given verb.

agent-noun; agential noun: Any noun that names the agent of an action.

agglutination: In general, the addition to a word or root of suffixes for the purpose of expressing grammatical categories and relationships, syntactical function, etc., and resulting in an easy-to-analyze organic unit. (Cf. *agglutinative language*.)

agglutinative language: A language which combines into a single word various linguistic elements, each of which has a distinct, fixed connotation and a separate existence. (E.g., the Finno-Ugric languages, Turkish, etc.)

Aghul: A language spoken in the Caucasus; a member of the Samurian branch of the Eastern group of the North Caucasian family of languages.

Agnean: See *Tokharian*.

agreement: See *grammatical agreement*.

Ahom: An extinct Siamese (*Shan*) dialect, surviving to a certain extent as the sacred language of a very small group.

Ainu: A language spoken by about 20,000 persons in Japan. While considered linguistically unrelated to any other known language, it is classified as a member of the *Hyperborean* or *Palaeo-Asiatic* group of languages (a geographical rather than a linguistic classification).

Akkadian: An extinct Semitic language, the only known representative of the Eastern branch of the Semitic group of lan-

guages, known to have been spoken in Mesopotamia from 2800 B.C. to the first century B.C. *Old Akkadian*, 2800-650 B.C., is called *Assyrian*; *New Akkadian*, after 650 B.C., is referred to as *Babylonian*. (*Assyro-Babylonian* is a term formerly generally used instead of *Akkadian*.)

Albanese: See *Albanian*.

Albanian: A member of the Indo-European family of languages, the native tongue of approximately 1,500,000 persons in Albania. Its two principal dialects are: *Gheg* and *Tosk*.

Alemannic: A Germanic dialect which became extinct about 1000 A.D., and which, with Bavarian and Lombard, developed into *High German* (q.v.).

Aleut: See *Eskimo-Aleut*.

Algonkin: See *Algonquian*.

Algonquian: A family of North American Indian languages, also called *Algonkin* or *Algonquin*, consisting of six surviving groups: *Eastern* (Central and Eastern Canada), *Central* (the Great Lakes region), *Californian* or *Ritwan*, *Blackfoot* (Alberta, Canada), *Cheyenne* (Montana) and *Arapaho* (Montana, Wyoming and Oklahoma).

aljimiado: Cf. *Mozarabic*.

allative: A declensional case used in various languages (e.g., Finnish, Eskimo, etc.), having the same denotation as the English preposition *toward*.

alliteration: The recurrence of the same initial sound or letter (or group of sounds or letters) in succeeding words.

allogram: A term used by I. J. Gelb, to designate "logographic, syllabic, or alphabetic signs or spellings of one writing when used as word signs or even phrase signs in a borrowed writing."

allomorph: A positional variant of a morpheme occurring in a specific environment. (E.g., *am* is an allomorph of *be*, occurring in the environment of *I*.)

allophones: The several variants of speech sounds, which constitute a phoneme (q.v.).

alogisms: Harold E. Palmer's term for the linguistic devices or *markers* (q.v.), such as word order, intonation, *affixation*