

## Place of Linguistics in English Language Teaching

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to indicate place of linguistics in English language teaching. This paper investigates how knowledge of linguistics can help to English language teaching in ELT classrooms. Linguistics always plays a vital role in studying language in general and English language in particular in ELT settings. Linguistics shares with human language, even attribute to other sciences can help us to understand our language. Linguistics has been concerned with language. Linguistics can be defined as the study of language. However, linguistics and language are closely intertwined, so discussion of one necessarily involves the other. Linguists, on the other hand, have long been aware of the fact that people learn and use languages. This paper focuses specially on language teaching and discusses the relation between linguistics and English language teaching.

**Key Words:** language teaching, English language, linguistics, English language teaching, competence and performance

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## Introduction

The present paper intends to study the highlight relationship between linguistics and English language teaching. Before, inquiring the relationship between linguistics and English language teaching in this article. We discuss briefly language teaching in language classrooms. The role of language teaching in language classrooms should be used based on written and oral language for a wide range of purposes. One of this models can be used in order to help language learners to use their target language is "fluency –based model of language teaching". According to Brumfit's fluency –based model of language teaching, the goal is stated such as: to enable learners to use the target language they have acquired for any purposes they wish, and to be able to extend as far as they wish (constrained by the time limits of the course). (Brumfit, 1984; p. 123). Richards et al (1992) argue that in second or foreign language teaching, fluency describes a level of proficiency in communication, which includes: 1) the ability to produce written or spoken language with ease; 2) the ability to speak with a good but not necessarily perfect command of intonation, vocabulary, and grammar; 3) the ability to communicate ideas effectively; 4) the ability to produce continues speech without causing comprehension difficulties or a breakdown of communication. Another models of language teaching is error analysis have been appeared as hypothesis in language teaching in recent years. A number of researchers such as Adjemian 1976; Corder 1967; Nemser 1971; Selinker 1972, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, point out that the language of second language learners is systematic and that learner errors are not random mistakes but evidence of rule-governed behavior ( Khansir 2012a). Corder (1967) claims that the information arrived at through error analysis could be useful to textbook writers, teachers and learners. Analysis of grammatical errors offered significant insight into the nature of difficulties in writing faced by second language learners (cited in Khansir, 2008; p.2). Khansir (2012a) argues that Learner's errors are seen as an integral part of language learning which is used in teaching grammar, linguistics, psychology etc. another model of language learning which we briefly mention is accuracy. Richards et al (1992) mention accuracy refers to the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences but may not include the ability to speak or write fluency. Last item in language teaching is communicative competence. Communicative competence is coined by Hymes (1971) as reaction to Chomsky's competence theory (1965) formed the basis of discourse analysis. It incorporates all the features like pragmatic and socio-cultural implications, speech acts and speech events, register etc. It aims at developing the communicative competence in learners along with the grammatical competence and not merely the grammatical competence (Khansir, 2012b). According to Hymes (1971) the theory of communicative competence is in terms of these four factors: 1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible – this corresponds to the familiar notion of grammatically. 2. Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible – This refers to psycholinguistic factors like memory limitation, embedding etc. 3. Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate – this refers to the relation between language and context. 4. Whether (and to what degree) something is done. This refers to the actuality of occurrence of a linguistic utterance. In addition, communicative competence is basically having the capability to use language in a speech community. Canale and Swain (1980) classify communicative competence into grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, which they soon divided into sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (cited in Khansir, 2012b). According to this discussion, Canale and Swain (1980) indicate strategic competence as one of the four components of communicative competence. Strategic competence is a part of linguistic competence (Bachman, 1990). However, it is used as an integral part of language

learning. Thus, these models of language learning have been used in order to resolve learners' problems in learning language learning.

Before inquiring directly language in this paper, let us investigate place of grammar in English language briefly. Radford (1998) says that grammar is traditionally subdivided into two different but inter-related areas of study- morphology and syntax. Morphology is the study of how words are formed out of smaller units (traditionally called morphemes). Whereas syntax is concerned with the ways in which words can be combined together to form phrases and sentences. Khansir and Pakdel (2016,) mentions that "grammar is primarily concerned with the study of language. It explains to us the difficulties and problems involved in learning a language and it guides us to how language is effectively used in our day-to-day life" (p.140).. They add that "grammar tells us how words are formed and why they are classified into various categories. It also instructs us how words are combined and grouped into sentences "(p.140). Nunan (2001) believes that the grammar of a language can be used as an analysis of the structure of the language. Katamba and Stonham (2006) discuss the terms grammar based on the use of linguists in at least four distinct senses. They made differentiated between generative linguistics and traditional approach, according to their explains, in traditional approaches 'grammar' only includes morphology and syntax, in generative linguistics the term grammar is employed in a much wider sense. It covers not only morphology and syntax but also semantics, the lexicon and phonology. Thus, there are rules of grammar in every linguistic module. Phonological rules, morphological rules, syntactic rules and semantic rules are all regarded as rules of grammar. Third, grammar and rules of grammar may refer to a book containing a statement of the rules and principles inferred by linguists to lie behind the linguistic behavior of speakers of a particular language. Therefore, these rules simply describe regular patterns observed in the linguistic data. Forth, some grammars are books containing prescriptive statements. Such grammars contain rules that prescribe certain kinds of usage. In addition, Khansir (2014) indicates about the role of grammar in language teaching based on "Grammar Translation Method", the learners need to learn about the grammar rules and vocabulary of the target language.

### **Language**

What is language? All of us know what language is, just like we know the palm of our hands. We all acquired a language early in life. However, man has been interested in studying and understanding the language that makes him human. Language can be defined as the bond that links people together and binds them to their culture. The study of language has always played a crucial role in the history man. Man has tried to know his language, know how speech sounds relate to meaning when he/she is speaking or writing ( khansir, 2010). Chomsky (1957) believes that all human beings possess at birth an innate capacity to acquire language. Such a capacity is biologically determined, that is, it belongs to what is usually termed "human nature" and it is passed from parents to children as part of the offspring's biological inheritance. The innate capacity endows speakers with the general shape of human language, but it is not detailed enough to dictate the precise tongue each child will speak which accounts for why different languages are spoken in the world. Chomsky (1972) argues that when we study human language, we are approaching what some might call 'the human essence,' the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man. All human beings have known and used a language since childhood. Therefore, man makes use of his language automatically without any conscious effort in his life. In native language, the native speaker of the language able to produce

particular sentences that he/she hears from his/her mother, thus; he/she is certainly able to produce and understand an infinite number of possible sentences naturally in his/her language.

The word "language" is often used to refer to several kinds of human activity, such as the language of music, language of circus, and so on. However, in its ordinary sense, it primarily focuses on the oral and written medium that we use to communicate with one another. We use it especially to refer to human language and thus we tend to distinguish between language and other forms of communication. A general definition characterizes language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which members of a society interact with one another. Language varies over the centuries, it varies geographically, and it also varies from situation to situation. We do not speak in the same way in all situations, for example, in a law court, a bar, at church, on the phone, at work, at a football match or to our friends, doctors, husbands, wives, bosses and children. A language cannot be accounted for by a uniform set of rules, which are always valid and always applied in the same way (Woolfolk, 2001).

The rules of each language event vary according to the nature of the activity, whether the medium is speech or writing, the roles of the participants, their relationships, their functions and intentions and so on. This means that every speaker has a number of different styles, which he changes according to the situation. To apply the same set of rules to all situations is symptomatic of an inability to grasp just how much we vary in our linguistic behavior from one situation to another and how much this variation is responsible for the flexibility of language, which enables us to use it for computer programs, advertisements, poetry, business deals and so on (Harding and Riley, 1986). Varshney (1998) mentions that language is the species-specific and species-uniform possession of man. It is God's special gift to mankind. He adds that language is that human expression which is uttered out by speech organs. Pinker (1994) argues that "language is a complex, specialized skill, which develops in the child spontaneous, without conscious effort or formal instruction, is developed without awareness of its underlying logic, is qualitatively the same in every individual, and is distinct from more general abilities to process information or behave intelligently" (p.18). One of the linguists, Scollon (2004) mentions that language is not something that comes in nicely packaged units and that it certainly is a multiple, complex, and kaleidoscopic phenomenon. Brown (2007) defines a number of language definitions such as language is systematic; language is a set of arbitrary symbols; language is used for communication; language operators in a speech community or culture; language is acquired by all people in much the same way; language and language learning both have universal characteristics; language is essentially human, although possibly not limited to humans. Finally, Kramsch (2009) indicates language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways. Finegan and Besnier (1989) define language as a finite system of elements and principles that make it possible for speakers to construct sentences to do particular communicative job. They add that the part of the system that allows speakers to produce and interpret grammatical sentences is called grammatical competence. It includes the knowledge of what speech sounds are part of a given language and how they may and may not be strung together. They believe that grammatical competence contributes similarity to comprehension in all human language. According to their ideas about language, the second part of language definition refers to the notion communicative competence. People frequently use of it in order to communicate with other people in the society. In addition, grammatical competence and

communicative competence are necessary for human interaction; in fact, a lot of the actual use of language is not in sentences at all, but in discourse units larger and smaller than sentences. Falk (1978) defines language as a mental phenomenon, a body of knowledge about sounds, meanings, and syntax which resides in the mind. Farhady and Delshad (2006) indicate that language based on the most scholars ideas are followed based on two principles: 1. Language is a system of arbitrary symbols and 2. It is used for human communication.

### **Linguistics**

Over the world people try to spend an immense amount of words in their life talking in order to communicate with other people in human societies. Thus, an inability to use an immense amount of words can affect the people's status in their societies and may directly effect on their personality. Because language is important in human life, every year, the role of language as an integral part of being human is increased among branches of linguistics such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and etc. In general, linguistics has always tried to answer the basic questions related to language: what is language? ; How does language work?; why do languages change in the history of human being? ; What do all languages over the world have not the same? .Hence, these questions have been frequently discussed by language experts through the world. What is important is that the languages have in common in learning. According to the discussion in this paragraph, Khansir and Tabande (2014) indicate in the study of language, language has been defined as a complex system of the human mind. They add that

the one of aims of the linguist's is to describe what man know about his language, and the second purpose of him is to consider how man acquire the knowledge of that language, third aim, what important for the linguist is that how man use it in order to communicate in his society, the forth, is that how the linguist help man use his mind to understand the language, (mental process) and the last one is that the linguist should know that man can complete his language knowledge implicitly , because man grow up with his language (p. 63-64).

A question arises what is linguistics, Varshney (1998) mentions that the word linguistics has been derived from Latin "lingua" (tongue) and "istics" (knowledge or science). He adds that linguistics based on etymologically, is the scientific study of language. But it is the study not of one particular language but of human language in general. Therefore, linguistics studies language as a universal and recognizable part of human behavior. Linguistics is that science which attempts to describe and analyze human language and also studies the origin, organization, nature and development of language descriptively, historically, comparatively, explicitly. Thus, it attempts to classify languages over the world. It formulates the general rules related to language. It considers language based on diachronic (historical) which studies the development of language through history, and time. One of the branches of linguistics is synchronic linguistics which studies how the people speak and use language in a given speech community at a given time. Another type of linguistics is comparative linguistics which compares two or more different languages in the world. Other linguists defines linguistics as the study of language; Widdowson (2009) mentions that linguistics is the name given to the discipline which studies human language. Chomsky (1965) defines linguistics as is principally concerned with the universal of human mind. He adds that linguistics can be defined as a branch of cognitive psychology. Richards et al (1992) indicate that linguistics is study of language as a system of human communication. Although studies of language phenomena have been carried out for

centuries, it is only fairly recently that linguistics has been accepted as an independent discipline. Linguistics now covers a wide field with different approaches and different areas of investigation such as phonetics, phonology, syntax, and semantics. Verghese (1989) says that linguistics is a science, a systematic body of knowledge and theory. Fries (1964) defines linguistics as a body of knowledge and understanding concerning the nature and functioning of human language, build up out of information about the structure, the operation, and the history of a wide range of very diverse human languages by means of those techniques and procedures that have proved most successful in establishing verifiable relationship among linguistic phenomena. Falk (1978) mentions that the aim of linguistics is to describe languages and to explain the unconscious knowledge all speakers have of their language.

Linguistic competence and linguistic performance: Chomsky (1965; p. 4) makes a fundamental distinction between "competence (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations)". What we understand of Chomsky idea about linguistic competence and linguistic performance is that linguistic competence is the unconscious knowledge about sounds, meanings, and syntax possessed by the speakers of a language whereas linguistic performance is actual language behavior and the use of language in daily life. Falk (1978) indicates that since linguistic competence is a mental reality, not a physical one, the isolation of competence from performance is a difficult task. Thus, Richards et al (1992) point out that competence refers to the ideal speaker-hearer, that is an idealized but not a real person who would have a complete knowledge of the whole language. They make differentiate between a person's knowledge of the language (competence) and how a person uses this knowledge in producing and understanding sentences (performance). Ellis (2008) says linguistic competence is knowledge of the grammar of the second language. Crystal (2003a) mentions that linguistic competence used as a term in linguistic theory, and especially in generative grammar. It refers to speaker' knowledge of their language, the system of rules which they have mastered so that they are able to produce and understand an indefinite number of sentences, and it recognizes grammatical mistakes and ambiguities. It is an idealized conception of language, which is seen as in opposition to the notion of performance, the specific utterances of speech. He adds that the theory of competence and performance by Chomsky is similar to the Saussurean distinction between *Lingue* and *Parole*. In addition, there are important differences between the definitions of competence and *langue*. Johnson and Johnson (1999) indicate competence in linguistic theory is the system of phonological, syntax and lexical rules acquired or internalized as a formal grammar by a native speaker during the language acquisition process in early child hood. They add that it underlies his / her ability to produce and understand the sentences of a given language, and identify ambiguous and deviant sentences whereas they believe that performance in the linguistic theory is the production of utterances in specific situations, and it depends additionally on memory limitations, as in the case of the production and the comprehension of extremely long sentences, social conventions, as in the case of the use of formal and informal linguistic expressions, personality, interests, tiredness , sobriety and other divers non-linguistic factors.

### **English Language**

The language is called English was introduced into Britain about 1500 years ago by invaders from the North Sea coast of the Continent. Thus, these invaders are known as the Anglo-Saxons (Trask, 2003). She adds that they were at first illiterate, but within several

centuries of settling in England, they had acquired the use of writing and then they started writing down all sorts of things in their English literary works. English language as an international language has been changing throughout its history. Khansir and Tajeri (2015; p. 66) mention that "languages change throughout their existence - new words get introduced, old words dropout of use, meanings shift and pronunciation alter. English language is no exception." Therefore, English language like all languages over the world that are spoken and written, English is not as the same as in the period of the Anglo-Saxons 1500 years ago. In the period of these years, English language has been changing: new words, pronunciations, grammatical form have a history in English from the Anglo-Saxons generation to the new generation. However, English language makes use of two transmission systems: speech and writing. Leech and Svartvik (2000) argue that speech is transmitted by sound-waves, originated in speaking and received in hearing. Writing is transmitted by letters and other visible marks, produced in writing and received in reading.

Today, English language possesses the largest population in the world: native and non-native speakers. More than three hundred million people over the world speak English language as their mother tongue. English speaking countries: the United States of America, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, the South Africa, New Zealand and other places. English language has been used by people over the world for communication in order to listen to broadcast, to read news magazine, newspaper, books, and travel to other part of the world etc. However, this language has been used as foreign language, second language by non-native speakers in order to resolve the social, commercial, educational and official issues. Crystal (1992) supports the claim as follows:

Some 350000000 use English language as a mother tongue, chiefly in the USA (220 million), the UK (55 million), Canada (17 million), Australia (15 million), New Zealand ( 3 million), other places. Crystal (2003b) adds that the total of 278059000 million represents a conservative estimate of those who lived in USA and speak English as their mother tongue in 2001.

English language has been given the position of an official language in the most of countries in the world. It has been used as a very effective link language among the countries over the world. It have been used the language of national and international communication among native and non- native speakers. It plays an important role in education over the world. Education is closely related to the acquisition of knowledge because the degree of education is determined on the basis of the degree of knowledge acquired. That is why it is often said that education is the gateway of knowledge ( Sivakumar ,1994). In the case of education, many students generally learn English language as a language subject and learn other non-language subject through the world. There is, in fact, English language as the medium of instruction among the students in countries that English is used as official or second language, the interaction between the students and the teachers in the case of education is satisfactory, because; the students less face problems created due to language problem. Thus, most of the teachers who teach the students in the different subjects have fewer problems to perform their lessons to them. English as world education language is tied to all subjects of our knowledge. According to this definition, Khansir (2013) mentions that English language is applied as international language of business, science and medicine. Jesa (2008) argues that the aim of teaching English language is

to make the learner an effective user of the language. He mentions of the general objectives of teaching English language as follows:

1. In listening , the general objectives of teaching English are to enable the learner to comprehend English when spoken at normal conversational speed;
2. In speaking, the general objectives of teaching English are to enable the learner to speak English with fluency , accuracy and appropriateness;
3. In reading, the general objectives of teaching English are to enable the learner to read English with comprehension at a reasonable speed;
4. In writing, the general objective of teaching English are to enable the learner to write English neatly and correctly.

He believes that in the teaching English language should be focused more on positive attitude in order to develop positive attitude towards the language.

### **Linguistics and English language**

Before, entering directly into an investigation of linguistics and the place of it in English language, it is important is that both linguistics and language are closely related. Investigations and attempts have been done to find out answers to certain fundamental questions about language like what is language? How is a language learnt? , What is difference between the first language acquisition and the second language learning? , Why the second language learning is difficult? And what are the similarities and dis –similarities between one language to another? And thus, there are more questions such as animal language, child language, etc. However, there are many misconceptions about the above questions. These questions are part of what have been discussed by linguists, researchers, and language teachers in the history of language teaching. One of the three groups of the language studies is linguist. Linguist is a person who studies linguistics. He has ability to study linguistic phenomena. We can conclude that linguistics as scientific study of language studies the original language and tries to answer the above questions. Therefore, language needs linguistics in several different scientific works and linguistics can help to strengthen all the language issues in reaching to answer the fundamental questions of human language.

Let us begin this part of discussion by briefly clarifying the relationship between linguistics and English language teaching. The teaching of English in second or foreign language settings remains as the most important issues in language education in recent years. Johnson and Johnson (1999) argue that in the twentieth century, however, the role of linguistics on language teaching has been pre-eminent. They add that this is in part due to its high profile as a new and innovative discipline, and the general belief that it is the nature of language which is most relevant to language teaching. Teaching of English language in ELT classroom obviously depends on the English teachers, linguists, and syllabus designers. Linguistics always provides the best process of learning English language to the students. In the history of English language, there have been the several hypotheses in the linguistics field in order to offer the kind of English instruction to motivate the students in learning their English language. Thus, the major important aim of linguistics is to facilitate the process of language teaching in general and English language in particular. Language teaching is carried out in all kinds of different issues of linguistics. During the past 60 years, linguistics attempts to apply theoretical models of language to issues in second language education. However, the theories have focused on issues of generative linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and systematic linguistics. One of the most

influential figures in linguistics is Chomsky. He (1959) argues that the behaviorist theory failed to account for the logical problem of language acquisition. He believes that the child learns his language same as the child learns to walk. Thus, generative linguistics produces very detailed and often dauntingly technical analyses of small areas of individual languages combined with extremely abstract generalizations about all languages ( Spolsky and Hult, 2008) . Thus, Chomsky is leader of it. Systemic linguistics is known as systemic functional linguistics is led by Halliday, and is strongly oriented towards education and it directly stay against generative linguistics. Halliday (2003; p. 433) mentions that "systemic or systemic-functional theory has its origin in the main intellectual tradition of European linguistics that developed in the work of Saussure in Asher 1994". Spolsky and Hult, (2008; p. 63) say that "its adherents tend to avoid the technical questions about the formal structure of language that dominate generative linguistics and not to engage with adherents of other linguistic theories, so its claims regarding the structure of language should be taken with caution". Cognitive linguistics, which is newer and has no single leader, brings together a number of general models which are united in rejecting the generative idea that language is unique and innate. In contrast, cognitive linguists believe that language is similar to other areas of cognition, and that it grows gradually through vast amounts of experience. Robinson and Ellis ( 2008) argue that a major challenge to applied cognitive linguists is to demonstrate to second language researchers and teachers that cognitive linguistics is not only a more complete and accurate theoretical model of language but also one that appears to be of particular benefit to second language learners. They add that cognitive linguistics and usage-based models explain how we learn language using environmentally adaptive, domain – general, cognitive abilities.

Linguistics as one of the language subjects has been discussed by great language scholars. Many language researchers have been evaluating place of linguistics in language teaching .The knowledge of linguistics is necessary in the teaching of foreign languages in general and English language in particular. Linguistics has influenced English language teaching. It is important is that linguistics increases English teachers ' understanding of the nature of language learning. In general, the aim of linguistics is to improve the process of language learning. Wilkins (1972) argues that for the language teacher the study of linguistics is probably more rewarding in this respect than in any other. He adds that we have seen a number of ways in which linguistics may help the language teacher to make more informed decision.

### Conclusion

The history of English language teaching is related to a number of academic disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, sociology, and education. This paper tried to show the relationship between linguistics and English language teaching. Thus, this relationship came back to 1957, when Fries and Lado had developed a language pedagogy based on behaviourist psychology and linguistics at the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Michigan in USA. After 1957, linguistics developed as a discipline in different ways. Universities established department of linguistics and TESOL was founded in the USA in 1966. Linguistics and language teaching were brought closely together (Eapen, 1995).

It is also necessary to keep in mind, which the basic schools of psychology have influenced English language teaching. Behaviourism had influenced the structural approach to the teaching of English and then cognitive approach was coined by Chomsky had influenced on

the English language. Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device hypothesis, supported cognitive psychology, and methodologies which eventually questioned the notion that input had to result in learner output, or even that output was solely dependent on classroom input. Communicative competence was felt to be as important as grammatical competence, and sociolinguistic and applied linguistic discussions on the contexts of language use, influenced the Communicative Approach paradigm in language teaching in general and English language teaching in particular. Contrastive analysis, error analysis, and discourse analysis which in turn has influenced on English language teaching.

In summary, linguistics has made the process of changing in English language teaching from 1940s to today. In the history of English Language Teaching, English language teachers, syllabus designers have gained a large body of information from the study of linguistics. English teachers have increased their language knowledge from linguistics and they have acquired the methods, techniques, approaches, in order to improve English language teaching in foreign or second language settings. Willkins (1972) argues that the value of linguistics is that by increasing language teacher's awareness of language, it makes him more competent and therefore a better language teacher. However, the important of linguistics as a necessary means of language studies has been felt in English language classrooms. Knowledge of linguistics actually can help the English language teacher understand and handle English language rules through teaching-learning strategies.

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