

Linguistics: Past, present and future

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Abstract

Linguistics is a discipline that is concerned with the study of languages. Linguistics is an aspect of learning that has gone through different phases. The framework under which this paper is discussed is, Historical Revisionism. Historical Revisionism is an approach to study which aid's one in tracing the history of a thing in order to be able to explain its present status. Some of the objectives of this paper are: to give a brief insight into the developmental stages of Linguistics, to comment on the present state of Linguistics and to project into the prospects of Linguistics. Information for this paper was gotten from textual materials. Some of the findings of this paper are: that Linguistics as an academic enterprise was confronted with a lot of challenges at the developmental stages as seen in the controversy between the analogists and anomalists, that translation began in the Medieval era of traditional grammar with studies in semantics, that the comparative study of language was done through the study of changes in sound, that Linguistics can help in the documentation, preservation and revitalization of the cultures of many people and their languages (both endangered and non-endangered languages), and that Linguistics has helped in the development of the orthographies of undeveloped languages. This paper is thus, beckoning on individuals and governments to aid studies in Linguistics towards the development and use of all the languages of the world to prevent the extinction of many languages. It is also calling for the

development of the human persons to continue the research in linguistic studies.

Keywords: Linguistics, language, history, traditional grammar, modern linguistics, and prospects.

1.0 Introduction

Linguistics is the scientific study of human language. In linguistics, spoken language is primary to the written form. (Lyons, “ Introduction to...”²²).An account of the history of linguistics is concerned with the study of all the past activities in the development of the study of language that has culminated in the emergence of in-depth investigation or research and development of the various aspects of the human language. This would involve a recall of the works of various Greek, Roman, Medieval, Renaissance and Modern Grammarians in the analyses and discoveries in language. The account of linguistics in this paper is divided into three phases of:

- the past (Traditional or Classical era)
- the present and
- the future.

According to (Lyons, “Introduction to...”²), “... nothing is more helpful to the layman or student making his first acquaintance with the science of linguistics than some knowledge of the history of the subject”. This means that the history of linguistics acts a tool to the understanding of the principles and assumptions governing modern linguistics. Thus, the history of linguistics is an enterprise that is poised to present and describe the great advances made in the scientific investigation of language in the past decades.

The theoretical framework that is used in this paper is; Historical Revisionism. According to an internet source, (“Historical revisionism” 1) “ Historical revisionism is a practice in historiography in which a historian reinterprets traditional views of causes and effects, decisions and evidence”. Thus, the term historical revisionism is concerned with the re-interpretation of a historical record. It also means challenging the orthodox views held by professional scholars about a historical event, or introducing new evidence, or restating the motivations and decisions of past events. In other words, historical revisionism is a recast of the past activities in a particular academic field of study, with the purpose to re-appraise past views or judgments in such a field. This is the background on which this paper is guided. Though, some have argued that the term ‘revisionism’ is used pejoratively by people who charge that revisionists are distorting the true historical records of a thing. Negationism is another term that is closely associated with historical revisionism. Negationism is a historical attempt to debunk a propaganda or a false report/image of an event or situation. This paper is set to state facts about the progressive developments in linguistics and not to debunk anything about it. Below, this paper shows that there has been a continuous line of developments from the Greco-Roman, Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern periods.

2.0 Past (traditional grammar)

This period is also referred to as the Alexandrian era. Traditional grammar dates back to the 5th 3rd century B.C. (Agbedo8), notes that “This era of language study is based on the philosophy and findings of Greek scholars like: Aristotle and Plato. Traditional grammar includes the Greek, the Roman, Medieval and Renaissance periods.

2.1 The Greek/Alexandrian period

The Greek or Hellenic period is the first phase in the traditional grammatical era. This period dates back to the 3rd century B.C. The Greek period was a time in the development of traditional grammar, when Greek grammarians working in the libraries established in the Greek colony of Alexandria, sought to restore and preserve the works of Homer and other classical writings. One of the targets of the Greek era of grammatical development was the spread of Hellenism. Hellenism is a cultural and linguistic conception which believes and stresses purism in spoken and written language. (Lyons 6) and (Agbedo8-9). Thus, in this period two forms of the Greek language existed: the pure Greek and the corrupt (Pidgin or debased) form called *koine* which was spoken by the illiterate Greek folks. This also implies that within this era, one could see that there was a stratification of the society into literate and illiterate citizens. In this era of traditional grammar, the Greeks were able to develop an alphabetic system for the language by their adoption of the Mycenaean writing system called logograms (or linear B) and the Phoenician script, which is a set of consonant script, with the vowels supplied by the speaker/user. Within this linguistic culture of Greek Hellenism, the Greeks made a tripartite distinction between: *grammatikos* (one who could read the Greek alphabetic letters), *grammar* (one who could read and write) and *Technegrammatike* (one who has a perfect skill in reading and writing). From all indications, it was imperative in the Greek linguistic philosophy to strive to be a *Technegrammatike* which was the highest level of linguistic attainment then. The Greek stoics in their inquisition into language, made a distinction between *analogy* and *anomaly*. This distinction corresponds to what is often called the *naturalist* and *conventionalist* division.

The *Analogists* or *Naturalists* believe that language was regular and highly systematic. They equally believed that the name given to an object was natural to it. The *Anomalists* or *Conventionalists* believe that language was highly irregular and that the referent (meaning) given to a word was based on the general acceptance (consensus) of a speech community. The irregular nature of language could be seen in the English words such as Child/children, buy/bought, sing/ sang and so forth. The Naturalists's claim on the word and meaning correspondence was in reference to onomatopoeic words which echoed back their meaning. Plato and Cratylus were extreme *Naturalists* of the Greek linguistic tradition. The belief of the *Naturalists* on the nature of language resulted in what was called eternal or deliberate etymology based on onomatopoeic words and sound symbolism where the nature of the sound found in a word has an implicit contribution to the general meaning of the word (thing) referred to. For instance /l / for liquids and the affricates /tʃ,dʒ/ for rough objects. Aristotle who was an *anomalist* in the Greek grammatical development did not deny the fact that there were regularities in the formation of words in language, but he pointed too to the many instances of irregular words for the formations of which analogical reasoning cannot account for. For example, the irregular plural forms in the English Language: Child/ Children. The stoic Greek linguists also made a distinction between form and meaning: that is the signifier (word/sound) and the signified (meaning/object). Thus, in the stoic school of Greek linguistic philosophy founded by Zono in 300B.C., phonetics, grammar and etymology were areas of language inquiry. The issue of synonyms in language was another instance that gave evidence to the irregular and anomalous nature of language. The argument of the *Analogist* or *Naturalist* was so fierce that they became prescriptive in this

Greek traditional era.(Lyons 7).The squabble between the *Analogists* and the *Anomalists* only helped out to see that there are both analogies and anomalies in human language. Hence, they both contributed to the systematization of language. Protagoras in the Greek linguistic history was the first person to distinguish the three main genders of masculine, feminine and neuter gender. Plato discovered nouns and verbs. Nouns by Plato were terms that could function in sentences as subjects of a predicate or objects of verbs and verbs were terms which could express the action of the quality (entity) predicated.(Lyons, "Introduction to..." 11). Aristotle discovered the class called conjunctions (*syndesmoi* in the Greek language) and (Lyons "Introduction to..."11) notes further that conjunctions in this Greek period included "...all those words which were not members of the major classes namely: nouns, verbs and adjectives". Aristotle kept the tripartite division of gender by Protagoras. He however recognized the verbal grammatical category called *tense* in the Greek verb which corresponds to the past, present or future temporal variations of the verb. The Greek stoics went further to make a distinction between proper and common nouns. The stoics grouped the adjectives with nouns. The stoics also went further to work on the Greek case system and articles. They equally discovered the inflexions in the Greek grammar. In the Greek case system, the stoics made a bipartite division between the nominative and the oblique case. They discovered *aspect* as a category associated with the verb. For example: the inceptive, completive and non-completive phases of an action. The stoics distinguished between the active and passive forms of construction, and also between transitive and intransitive verbs.

Dionysius Thrax, a Greek grammarian discovered the adverb, the participle (i.e -ing) because of its participation or occurrence with both the verbs and the noun. Thrax further discovered the pronoun and preposition in addition to the earlier mentioned parts of speech discovered by Plato, Aristotle and the Greek stoics. Dionysius Thrax, author of *TechneGrammatike* distinguished between the sentence which he called *logos* in the Greek language and which is the upper most linguistic unit and the word which he called *lexis* in Greek, which was then in this era called the minimal grammatical unit. Holding fast to the grammatical discoveries of Plato, Aristotle, the stoics and his personal discoveries, Dionysius Thrax was able to establish the following parts of speech in the Greek language: Onoma (noun), Metoche (participle), Syndesmoi (conjunctions), Prothesis (preposition), Arthron (articles), Antonymia (pronoun), Epirrhema (adverb), and Rhema (verb). Herodias, another Greek scholar worked on the Greek accentuation and punctuation covering the field of prosodis as referred to by Thrax. (Agbedo10). In the Greek linguistic history, it was in Alexandra that the Greek traditional grammar was codified i.e. put into text or writing (Lyons, "Introduction to..."11). The collapse of Greek imperial power brought in the Roman era of linguistic study.

2.2 The Roman period

After the collapse of the Greek imperial power, the Roman aristocracy took over and adopted all that the Greeks were known for. According to (Lyons, "Introduction to..."13), "Less need be said about the work of Latin grammarians. It is a matter of common knowledge that in every sphere of Roman scholarship, art and literature, Greek influence was Supreme". Thus, the Romans inherited all that the Greeks had developed. The Roman

linguistic traditional era, dates back to the 2nd century B.C. In this era, Roman grammarians encouraged the use of both Greek and Latin. The Roman scholars were also, sent to Greece to complete their education in order to adequately imbibe the Greek Hellenistic culture and philosophy. Varro a Latin grammarian was a reflection of the influences of the Greek philosophy in the thought and learning of the Roman grammarian. This is because Varro's work on the Latin grammar still carried on the controversy between the *Naturalists* (analogists) and the *Conventionalists* (anomalists) which was prevalent in the Greek Alexandrians and stoics. Grammar, in this Roman era continued to be seen as the act of correct speech and the understanding of the letters, syllables and parts of speech. As such, errors in speech and writing were frowned at, pidginized (koine) or reduced forms of Greek and Latin were not allowed to be used except may be amongst the commoners who were seen as outcasts in the society. Any foul language form was referred to as *barbaric*. Varro's linguistic ideas were coded in his great work titled *De Lingua Latina*. He made impacts in the areas of etymology, morphology and syntax. He also made a distinction between derivational and inflectional morphemes. He discovered that aspect and tense are verbal grammatical categories, while case is a nominal grammatical category in both the Greek and Latin languages. (Agbedo 10-11). The comparison of the Greek and Latin languages by the Roman grammarians who automatically had to be efficient users of the two languages led them to the conclusion that the various grammatical categories elaborated by the Greek Scholars like, the parts of speech, case, number tense and so forth, were universal and necessary categories of every human language and this view was carried on to the medieval period. (Lyons 14). Palaemon in this Roman era

discovered and defined interjection as a word class that has no stable meaning but indicates emotion. Quintilian, another Roman grammarian like Varro worked on the Latin case system. Priscian a Latin linguist taught Latin in Constantinople and he continued to propagate the works of Dionysius Thrax on the eight parts of speech. By studying Thrax's work on the Greek morphology, he was able to carry out a morphological description of the Latin language. His work on the morphology of the Latin verbs helped him in distinguishing between the present and past tenses in the Latin language. He equally made a distinction between aspect and tense in the Latin grammar. Priscian classified the Latin verbs into active which he called transitive verbs, passive or neutral verbs which he called intransitive verbs. According to (Agbedo12), "Priscian can be said to do for the Latin language what Thrax did for the Greek". Donatus (A.D. 400) and Priscian (A.D. 500) kept the Greek Alexandrian doctrine of classicism. They worked and analyzed the literary writings of the Greek writers: Cicero and Virgil, which helped in toning up and shaping their mental capacity and direction in all their linguistic drives. In the Roman tradition, Caesar was an analogist who saw language as natural, regular and systematic. The Roman period of linguistic study was followed by the Medieval era.

2.3 The Medieval period

The Medieval period dates back to the 13th century AD. The Medieval period was the period that came up due to the collapse of the Roman Empire. The Medieval period is often referred to as the period between the Classical Roman Empire and Renaissance. It is sometimes also referred to as the Dark Age; dark in the sense that a lot of barbarism was allowed into the fallen empire of Rome. In this era, Latin continued to be the

language of education, liturgy, diplomacy and culture. This meant that grammar books were written in the Latin language. Most of the grammar books at this time were developed based on the writings of Donatus and Priscian. (Lyons 14) has it that, “even though Latin was the written language, each district had its own pronunciation which resulted in dialectal variations. In the Medieval period, the written form of language continued to wield a great influence over the spoken form and any spoken form that deviated from the written standardized form was termed incorrect”. The Medieval grammar was a time of great scholasticism. Scholasticism, in this period was the result of the integration of Aristotelian philosophy into Catholic theology by persons like St. Thomas Aquinas. These scholastic philosophers were interested in the study of the meanings of words. The philosophers at this period were referred to as *Modistae*. They believed in the science of deduction. Grammar at this time became abstract and semantically contextual since meaning was quite metaphorical. The works of the Medieval grammarians were titled: *De modes significando* meaning “the Modes of signifying”. The *modistae* as the philosophers of this era were called believed that language was universal. Their argument was that whoever knows grammar in one language also knows it in another in so far as its substance is concerned. If he cannot however speak another language, or understand those who speak it, this is because of the difference of words and their formations which is accidental to grammar (Lyons, “Introduction to...”14-15). In the Medieval period, the seven liberal arts formed the bases of learning. The first three of the liberal arts were: the grammar, dialectic (logic) and rhetoric. These three were referred to as the trivium and they formed the earliest form of learning. The second part was made up of: music, arithmetic, geometry and

astronomy. This second part of the learning programme in the medieval period was called the quadrivium. Translation was a major distinctive feature of the philosophers of this era. They were able to do this because of their involvement in semantics which led them to study the meaning of words in isolation and in stretches of utterances. With that disposition in the study of the Latin grammar, they were able to establish contrasts and similarities in words in relation to the context of use. St. Jerome in this period with his background in semantics was able to translate the Bible into Latin. His achievement of this was based on the fact that he rendered sense for sense instead of word for word. Aelfric, a prominent linguist of the Medieval era, wrote the Latin Grammar and the Colloquium by his adoption of the works of Donatus and Priscian from the Roman Traditional Grammar. Like the Greek and Roman Periods, the Medieval age promoted proper spelling of words and phonological articulations of sound segments. Hence the Medieval period in spite of all odds did much to keep the works and arguments of the Greek and Roman periods which preceded it. The next era in the study of language after the Medieval period was the Renaissance era which came up with a lot of innovations in the study of language.

2.4 The Renaissance

The word ‘renaissance’ in the French language means rebirth. This period dates back to the 16th century A.D. This period was the era/age of return to Greco – Roman classicism. This age in the history of linguistics, foreshadowed what the study of language was going to be in the modern time. In this age, Latin continued to be the language of politics, education and philosophy. This age was the era of departure from barbarism. More attention was given to the study of the literary works of Cicero and Virgil. In

this age of return to wisdom, even though Latin continued to be the medium of instruction, other European languages that were previously referred to as vernacular because of their non-official use or lack of written texts in them were studied and grammar texts were written on them. For instance other languages spoken in Rome that were not Latin like: Irish, Icelandic, Provençal, and Port Royal languages were studied in schools. With the invention of printing in the 15th century A.D., classical texts were published. This era of linguistic development saw the writing of the Hebrew grammar referred to as the *De Rudiments Hebraicis* by Reuchlin and N. Clenards. Comparative study of the Hebrew and Arabic languages was carried out by Ibn Barun and similarities of the two Semitic (Arabic) languages were established. In the Arabic language, Sibawaihi wrote, the grammar of Basra called; *Al Kitab*. European languages like French, Italian, Polish and Old Church Slavonic had grammar texts written on them. This age witnessed the comparison of the Romance Languages by studying the sound changes in Spanish, French and Latin after which Latin was discovered to have been the parent language from which the other languages diverged. The development of printing encouraged the spread of literacy because teaching and learning were encouraged at various places. This means learning was decentralized and was no longer only concentrated in Greece or Rome. Learned societies were established to foster linguistic inquiries towards the establishment of language universals, (features common to all languages of the world). In Britain for instance, the *Royal society* was founded in 1662 while Cardinal Riche established the *Academic FranXaise* in French. Within the Renaissance, information has it that the Chinese Language was studied within this era of linguistic development. From all indications, much was done in this era

since learning was widely spread due to the decentralization of learning centers. Immediately after the Renaissance period of Traditional Grammar came the Comparative era of linguistic studies.

2.5 The age of comparative linguistic

This period of linguistic studies dates back to the 19th century A.D. A prominent scholar of the period was Sir William Jones, a judge in the British court in India. By comparing languages, Sir William Jones was able to establish the historical/linguistic similarity in Sanskrit which is the classical religious language of the Indian people with Latin, Greek and Germanic languages. At this period, history has it that the Indians had an independent earlier linguistic scholarship which dates earlier than the Greco-Roman inquisitions into the nature of language. However the Indian linguistic study had the same perspective of the Greco-Roman view of *convention/analogy* status of language and the preservation of classical texts. Another great scholar in the 4th century B.C. of this tradition is Paṇini. He wrote the Sanskrit grammar which is found in his book called *Astathyahi*. The Indian grammarians compiled glossaries and commentaries on the sacred Hindu texts of which the Vedic hymns were composed. Indian tradition also made efforts to establish the origin and development of human language. Some scholars who attempted to establish the origin of the human language are: E.B. de Condillia 1746 and Rousseau 1795. Their view was that language originated in deictics (i.e use of demonstrative words) and imitative gestures and natural cries. They went further to argue that since gestures were not an effective means of communication, the phonic elements in language became dominant. In this age of comparative linguistic study, are

German scholars like: Max Muller, F. Bopp, F. Schlegel and A.F. Poff. (Agbedo 15). In the 19th Century when the Hindu tradition was discovered, (Lyons, “Introduction to...”18), has it that “the distinction between nouns and verbs was drawn in much the same way as it was drawn by Plato for the Greek language”. This means a contrast between the lexical items that could serve as the subject and the predicate was made. The Indian tradition worked on the internal (morphology) structure of words. The preposition and the participle were also established in the Indian grammar by Paṇini. The tradition insisted on the correct pronunciation of Sanskrit words. Paṇini in his work made use of abbreviations and symbols. He established rules for the description and analysis of the Sanskrit language. The discoveries in the works of Paṇini were later developed by western scholars who saw his works as quite informative and insightful more than what the Greco-Roman tradition offered them. (Lyons, “Language and...” 19). In summary, the Indian linguistic tradition contributed much to the development of linguistic studies. The close of the Comparative Age of linguistic study was followed by Modern linguistic study.

3.0 Present (modern linguistics)

What is presently known as Modern linguistics began in the early 20th century. Modern linguistics was preceded by the age of Renaissance which tried to recall the ideas of traditional grammarians. One could equally say that Renaissance gave the tone of what modern linguistics would be due to the radical linguistic changes that were witnessed in that age. Modern linguistics was a period where language studies were carried out without much recourse to history. A prominent scholar in the 20th century linguistic studies is, Ferdinand de Saussure. (Ndimele,

“Readings on...” 13), refers to him as, “the father of modern linguistics”. He did not write any book, but his students after his death post-humously published a book on his behalf called *Cours de Linguistique Générale*. The approach of language study in this age was quite different from the method of language studies in the previous ages. The reason for this is that spoken language was given primacy over the written language. Moreso, in this age of the history of linguistics, there was a general interest in the study of all languages whether such languages were written or not, since the spoken language precedes the written. All languages were also seen as equal whether it had a written form or not as far as it could satisfy the needs of its users. Though languages could develop through the formation of more vocabularies to meet the pressing needs of its users. Modern linguistics is also the age of descriptive language studies. This is because the essence/goal of the linguist is to describe and explain what a native speaker actually says and not what he ought to say. In other words, every form of a language has its own standard of ‘purity’ and correctness. In modern linguistics the data for the analysis of any aspect of language must be based on observable information. The interrelation of every aspect of language was equally discussed in Ferdinand de Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics*. This perception of language has given every language a wholistic outlook where no aspect of a language can independently exist on its own. Hence, the levels: phonetics, morphology, syntax and semantics work interrelatedly in every language for the interpretation of meaningful segments. In Modern Linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure made a distinction between *langue* and *parole*. According to Saussure, *parole* is the linguistic performance of an individual, while *langue* is the sum total of his mental or subconscious knowledge of his language. In modern

linguistics, *parole* is the observable linguistic productions, while *langue* is the mental faculty which controls the production of *parole* and which determines the acceptable and unacceptable forms in accordance to the rules of a language. For Ferdinand de Saussure, *langue* is a shared communal knowledge of a language. Ferdinand's perception of *langue* contrasts with Chomsky's 1965 perception of what *competence* is. For Chomsky, *competence* (langue), is an individual's innate knowledge of his language, while *performance* is the actual use of this knowledge in practical communication. For Chomsky, *performance* varies from person to person due to inhibiting factors of one's mind, drunkenness, illness, psychological, social factors and so on which inhibits an effective reflection of one's *competence* (langue). In Modern linguistics, Chomsky adds that a native speaker apart from knowing the rules operational in his language, must be socially competent by knowing the appropriate situations of the use of each structure in his language. To (Hymes, "On communicative...", 1971), this is what is called *communicative competence*. Structuralism which involves the structural study of morphemes (free and bound) and sentences also began in Modern linguistics. The essence of structuralism is to show the interdependence of linguistic units either on the paradigmatic or syntagmatic axis. Another notable Modern linguist is Leonard Bloomfield whose emphasis was on the objectivity of the linguist in his account of data. Bloomfield also stressed the description of every data in an explicit manner. The title of Chomsky's book called *Syntactic Structures* in 1957, reflects the core interest of Modern Linguistic studies. In Modern Linguistics, Chomsky stressed the creative ability of language with rules guiding the acceptable and non-acceptable forms. Language (grammar) in Modern linguistics refers to the totality of the innate body of

linguistic rules governing a native speaker's use of his language. In Modern Linguistics, language universals were emphasized with parametric differences unique to each language.

In the present time, linguistic enterprise has been able to carry on the past discoveries of language scholars. Today, studies are carried out on many branches of linguistics such as: psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, philosophical linguistics, applied linguistics, computational linguistics, forensic, stylistics and so on. The structural analysis of sentences in recent linguistic studies have received immense attention with the application of syntactic theories such as: the X-Theory, the Minimalist Theory and the increased typological analyses of sentence types have shown insights into the nature of the human languages. The insights in syntactic studies, permits one to account for relative clauses, serial verb constructions, overlapping constructions, the use of prepositions in Subject Verb Object languages and post positions in Subject Object Verb languages, and the extensive classification of languages into families. Recent studies in phonetics have given rise for the account of ambivalent segments, assimilation, nasalization, aspiration, intervocalicity, down drifts and syllabic patterns all of which were not of the major concerns of past(traditional) linguistic enterprise . In pragmatics, the Speech Act Theory has helped in the understanding that utterances are acts capable of producing enormous and far reaching results and consequences. The theory has helped in shaping one's behavior in a talk-exchange (Ndimele, " Semantics and..."132-149). Recent linguistic studies also include the study of context in relation to meaning. (Ndimele, " Semantics and..." 144). In the present, linguistic studies have extended to language documentations which aims at gathering and preserving long lasting corpora while a language is still being spoken, that could

be used for language or cultural preservation and revitalization. In current linguistic enterprise, the theories of Error and Contrastive Analysis have helped in the teaching and learning of a second or foreign language. Current studies in language have also been involved in the literary analysis of texts by the application of the principles of Critical Theory. The areas of involvement of linguistics in the academia is inexhaustible and cannot all be expressed in this paper.

4.0 Future

The future is very bright for linguistics. There is no facet of human life where linguistic studies will not be required. Presently, language documentation is on going for most languages for the preservation and revitalization of culture. Forensic studies which is an aspect of linguistics is helping to detect and curb crimes. Descriptive studies of language at all levels have helped in the account of a native speaker's competence of his language. Sociolinguistic studies have accounted for the various nuances of a language with reference to: age, sex, class, context and so on. Thus, linguistics permeates into every area of life. For this reason, language studies will grow and change to meet the demands of human enterprise. The sciences cannot thrive without linguistic studies in that linguistics helps to edit the register for the discussion of every academic field of enquiry so that meaning will not be miscarried, and where there is any ambiguity, linguistic studies help to make clarifications. In the global scheme of things, linguistic studies is highly indispensable, because as far as language will continue to be used to pass information from one ethnic group to the other amongst people of different languages, linguistic studies will continue to be relevant because there will be the need to have

foreign language teachers, translators, interpreters and broadcasters all over the world. For national development and planning, linguistics will also be relevant. This is because in every country there will always be the need to look into the linguistic situation of its society. If a country is multilingual in nature, as is the case in Nigeria, linguistic aid will be required to determine which languages will be studied as foreign or be used for official transactions and for purposes of instruction. More so, linguistic skills are needed for the development of national language(s) and other local languages so that no language is left unattended to. Apart from air, food, shelter and clothing, language or linguistic studies is the next indispensable element for human existence, since in human life communication is a necessity. Studies in psycholinguistics have accounted for the relation between the mind (brain) and language use. From the little this paper has been able to express, one can see that the linguistic enterprise will continue to be relevant to mankind in various areas of his endeavour. So far, one has seen the bright side of linguistics, but it would be incomplete for one not to mention that the linguistic enterprise is faced with many challenges. One of such challenges is that many languages are yet to be written or have grammar books on them. Another challenge that this field of study has is that many languages have gone into extinction without any documentation as to how to recover them. More so, many languages are not adequately utilized as languages of instruction. For these reasons linguists have a lot of tasks before them. This therefore calls for government's support in the codification, development and use of all languages in the world. Also governments need to train and retrain the linguists who would handle these tasks.

5.0 Conclusion

In summary, this paper has made an attempt to give an account of the inception of the linguistic enterprise from the traditional grammar which refers to the Greek and Roman studies in language to the modern linguistic studies which gave primacy to the spoken language and was descriptive in approach. For this reason, most language scholars in this era are called structuralists. In modern linguistic study, all languages were considered equal. All the levels of language were observed to be interrelated for the generation of meaningful units in every language. The distinction between competence (*langue*) and performance (*parole*) was made by Ferdinand and Chomsky. In the present linguistic study, this paper made mention of the various aspects in which language skills have been extended into such areas as: literature, language teaching and learning, language and society, language planning, speech acts and so on. So far, this paper is not exhaustive in its content, but it has helped to inform us that what is called linguistics has come a long way in spite of many challenges in its various stages of development and it has become a very indispensable field of study in every area of human life.

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