THE HISTORY OF WORLD LINGUISTICS: MAJOR STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: This article examines the major stages in the historical development of world linguistics, including ancient linguistic traditions, medieval linguistic scholarship, Renaissance humanism, comparative-historical linguistics, structuralism, generative linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and modern computational linguistics.

Keywords: linguistics, history of linguistics, language studies, structuralism, language theory.

Language is one of the most distinctive characteristics of human civilization. It serves as the primary means of communication, cultural transmission, social interaction, and cognitive development. The scientific investigation of language has occupied scholars for thousands of years, resulting in the emergence and evolution of linguistics as an independent academic discipline.

The history of linguistics is closely connected with the intellectual history of humanity. Different civilizations have developed unique approaches to language analysis, motivated by philosophical, literary, educational, and practical concerns. Over time, linguistic inquiry evolved from descriptive observations of language usage into a rigorous scientific discipline employing systematic methodologies and theoretical frameworks.

One of the earliest and most sophisticated linguistic traditions emerged in ancient India. The Indian grammatical tradition developed primarily in connection with the preservation and interpretation of sacred texts known as the Vedas.

The most influential figure in ancient Indian linguistics was Pāṇini, whose work *Ashtadhyayi* (approximately 4th century BCE) is considered one of the greatest achievements in linguistic history.

Pāṇini's grammar:

- Contained approximately 4,000 grammatical rules.
- Described Sanskrit systematically.
- Employed formal and analytical methods.
- Anticipated many concepts of modern linguistics.

Many scholars regard Pāṇini as the founder of scientific grammar.

Ancient Greek philosophers made significant contributions to linguistic thought.

Important scholars included:

- Plato
- Aristotle
- Dionysius Thrax

Greek scholars explored fundamental questions such as:

- The relationship between language and reality.
- The origin of words.
- The nature of meaning.
- Grammatical classification.

Dionysius Thrax's grammatical descriptions influenced linguistic education for centuries.

The history of world linguistics reflects a continuous intellectual effort to understand the nature of language and its role in human life. Beginning with the grammatical traditions of ancient India, Greece, and Rome, linguistic inquiry evolved through medieval scholarship, Renaissance humanism, Enlightenment philosophy, comparative-historical linguistics, structuralism, generative grammar, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and computational approaches.

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