

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON HISTORICAL LINGUISTIC

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A CRITICAL REVIEW ON HISTORICAL LINGUISTIC WRITTEN IN WIKIPEDIA

Endang Yuliani Rahayu
Universitas Stikubank Semarang

Abstract

When does a language begin? The truth is that it happens since the era of Aristoteles. Learning from those great philosophers' era, we might want to know further about historical languages. The history will tell about the issues related to the languages and also other factors deal with it. The language here is not only English but also other languages. The record prove that there are some languages had been extinct since there are no more native speakers of the language. Since the language is found, the science of it is developed. The development of linguistics occurred until now. There are many branches of linguistics. There have been some changes too due to the linguistics. To find out more about what historical linguistics is, the writer tries to give critical for the article uploaded in Wikipedia about Historical Linguistics.

Key words : *language, linguistics, historical linguistics*

INTRODUCTION

People communicate using language. There are two forms of languages namely verbal and non verbal. For the verbal type, we may say that it is spoken form but on the other hand the non verbal type belongs to written ones. What about body language? Which category does it belong to? Body language or is familiar with the term gesture belongs to non verbal language type. It is said so as the form of it is using the body part and body movement. Some people will say that this kind of language is known as sign language for special purpose. The sign language is used for deaf people who can not listen and speak. Those group of people communicate using sign language.

Is language the only medium for communication? The answer is yes. The next thing is it depends on the purpose of communication. If we want to deliver message whether it is written or spoken, of course we will need language. But if we want to deliver our feeling, we can use our body part. The use of body part can convey some messages too, but each country has its own gesture. That is why language is unique as it is only known by community who uses it.

Language is a result of a culture. Dictionary describes culture is the beliefs, way of life, art and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society.

(Longman, 2004:382). Whereas language is described as a system of communication by written or spoken words, which is used by the people of a particular country or area. (Longman, 2004:902). Moreover, communication is the process by which people exchange information or express their thoughts and feelings. (Longman, 2004:307)

Talking about a language will also influence the knowledge of it. It is called linguistics. Linguistics is the study of language in general and of particular languages, their structure, grammar and history. (Longman, 2004:941). It refers to Philology. What is philology? Philology is the study of words and of the way words and languages develop. (Longman, 2004:1228)

THEORETICAL REVIEW

1. Historical Linguistics

Historical linguistics (also called diachronic linguistics) is the study of language change. It has five main concerns (Wikipedia):

- 1) to describe and account for observed changes in particular languages
- 2) to reconstruct the pre-history of languages and determine their relatedness, grouping them into language families (comparative linguistics)
- 3) to develop general theories about how and why language changes
- 4) to describe the history of speech communities
- 5) to study the history of words, i.e. etymology.

Modern historical linguistics dates from the late 18th century. It grew out of the earlier discipline of philology, the study of ancient texts and documents dating back to antiquity. (Wikipedia). Based on the development of linguistics we can say that linguistics has made some changes therefore there are some new branches in linguistics. It is because of the facts shown referring to the artifacts written by some philosophers whom are well known by their findings.

According to Wikipedia, at first, historical linguistics was comparative linguistics. Scholars were concerned chiefly with establishing language families and reconstructing prehistoric proto-languages, using the comparative method and internal reconstruction. The focus was initially on the well-known Indo-European languages, many of which had long written histories; the scholars also studied the Uralic

languages, another European language family for which less early written material exists.

Since then, there has been significant comparative linguistic work expanding outside of European languages as well, such as on the Austronesian languages and various families of Native American languages, among many others. Comparative linguistics is now, however, only a part of a more broadly conceived discipline of historical linguistics. For the Indo-European languages, comparative study is now a highly specialized field. Most research is being carried out on the subsequent development of these languages, in particular, the development of the modern standard varieties.

Some scholars have undertaken studies attempting to establish super-families, linking, for example, Indo-European, Uralic, and other families into Nostratic. These attempts have not been accepted widely. The information necessary to establish relatedness becomes less available as the time depth is increased. The time-depth of linguistic methods is limited due to chance word resemblances and variations between language groups, but a limit of around 10,000 years is often assumed. The dating of the various proto-languages is also difficult; several methods are available for dating, but only approximate results can be obtained.

2. Evolution into other Fields

As it is written in Wikipedia, initially, *all* modern linguistics was historical in orientation, even the study of modern dialects involved looking at their origins. Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between synchronic and diachronic linguistics is fundamental to the present day organization of the discipline. Primary is in accordance to synchronic linguistics, and diachronic linguistics is defined as the study of successive synchronic stages. Saussure's clear demarcation, however, is now seen to be idealised.

From historical changes into modern needs some steps to realize it. The linguistics is generated from synchronic and diachronic. The pioneer in this field is started by Ferdinand de Saussure, he stated that modern philology deals with the origin of the language itself. It is oriented in the history of the language.

In practice, a purely synchronic linguistics is not possible for any period before the invention of the gramophone, as written records always lag behind speech in reflecting linguistic developments. Written records are difficult to date accurately before

the development of the modern title page. Also, the work of sociolinguists on linguistic variation has shown synchronic states are not uniform: the speech habits of older and younger speakers differ in ways that point to language change. Synchronic variation is linguistic change in progress.(Wikipedia)

The data recorded to prove the historical linguistics are in the form of spoken and written data. The written data recorded in such a way all in the forms of writing whereas spoken data is started to use after the invention of the gramophone. Those data prove that linguistics developed through the years.

The biological origin of language is in principle a concern of historical linguistics, but most linguists regard it as too remote to be reliably established by standard techniques of historical linguistics, such as the comparative method. Less-standard techniques, such as mass lexical comparison, are used by some linguists to overcome the limitations of the comparative method, but most linguists regard them as unreliable. (Wikipedia)

In modern terms, the phrase biological origin of language is called biolinguistics. Nowadays, some scholars conducted study in this field to find out the brain part to prove that the brain includes the production of the language involving neuron. There is another knowledge learning about the neuron named neurolinguistics.

The findings of historical linguistics are often used as a basis for hypotheses about the groupings and movements of peoples, particularly in the prehistoric period. In practice, however, it is often unclear how to integrate the linguistic evidence with the archaeological or genetic evidence. For example, there are numerous theories concerning the homeland and early movements of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, each with its own interpretation of the archaeological record. (Wikipedia)

In the ancient era, the development of language written in the artifacts refers to the movement of the people who live in that era. They tend to be mobile people as they move a lot to be survive. If they move, they will leave their evidence such as pictograph (picture writing) in the cave so that the future generation can use their proof to be investigated.

3. Sub-fields of Study

a. Comparative linguistics

Comparative linguistics (originally **comparative philology**) is a branch of historical linguistics that is concerned with comparing languages in order to establish their historical relatedness. Languages may be related by convergence through borrowing or by genetic descent, thus languages can change and are also able to cross-relate.(Wikipedia)

The study of language can be compared across languages in order to find out the differences and similarities of those languages. This activity is called comparative linguistics because it compares at least two different languages. By learning this, we can trace back the historical relationship among those languages being investigated.

Genetic relatedness implies a common origin or proto-language. Comparative linguistics has the goal of constructing language families, reconstructing proto-languages, and specifying the changes that have resulted in the documented languages. To maintain a clear distinction between attested language and reconstructed forms, comparative linguists prefix an asterisk to any form that is not found in surviving texts.(Wikipedia)

What is the aim of learning comparative linguistics? It is to learn about the history of the language. History proved that there is a common origin that is believed by some scholars. It is the proto-language. The proto-language is the family of languages resulted from the comparative linguistics.

b. Etymology

Etymology is the study of the history of words — when they entered a language, from what source, and how their form and meaning have changed over time. A word may enter a language as a loanword (i.e., as a word from one language adopted by speakers of another language), through derivational morphology by combining pre-existing elements in the language, by a hybrid of these two processes called phonosemantic matching, or in several other minor ways.(Wikipedia)

Without a word there will never be a language. How can it be like that? A word must be existed in any kinds of languages, either spoken or written. Word is needed in order to create a sentence. Then there are some sentences that are arranged to create a conversation. The conversation occurred with the existence of words. Language needs words therefore it will not be a language without a single word. The study of a language

is called etymology. Etymology is a branch of linguistics deals with words. In this study the word will be analysed in terms of its origin, meaning and its construction.

In languages with a long and detailed history, etymology makes use of philology, the study of how words change from culture to culture over time. Etymologists also apply the methods of comparative linguistics to reconstruct information about languages that are too old for any direct information (such as writing) to be known. By analyzing related languages with a technique known as the comparative method, linguists can make inferences, about their shared parent language and its vocabulary. In this way, word roots that can be traced all the way back to the origin of, for instance, the Indo-European language family have been found. Although originating in the philological tradition, much current etymological research is done in language families for which little or no early documentation is available, such as Uralic and Austronesian.

Referring to the past time, history recorded that learning a language will also learn the culture. Culture is the beliefs, way of life, art and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society. Language is a part of culture that has been descended from generation to generation. Time will tell how long the origin of certain language existed before it developed. It is important to find out the family of a language so that the linguists can get resourceful data to conduct study about language and its origin.

c. Dialectology

Dialectology is the scientific study of linguistic dialect, the varieties of a language that are characteristic of particular groups, based primarily on geographic distribution and their associated features. This is in contrast to variations based on social factors, which are studied in sociolinguistics, or variations based on time, which are studied in historical linguistics. Dialectology treats such topics as divergence of two local dialects from a common ancestor and synchronic variation. (Wikipedia)

Indonesia has many vernaculars. Those vernaculars are varied in terms of dialect. The linguistic dialect can also be learnt to find out the origin of the dialect. The dialect is a kind of language variety that is geographically different from one to another. For example, people who are from Central Java they may speak different dialects, let's say Javanese in Jogjakarta dialect is different from Solo dialect.

Dialectologists are concerned with grammatical features that correspond to regional areas. Thus, they are usually dealing with populations living in specific locales for generations without moving, but also with immigrant groups bringing their languages to new settlements. (Wikipedia)

The experts in dialects are called dialectologists. They are concerned with the grammatical features of a dialect that corresponds to regional area. The geographical area will tell about the source of the dialect. The people who are living in the area probably are native and non native, but they can manage using the dialects. Later, there will be some influences toward the real dialects as the non native will also speak using their own dialect.

d. Phonology

Phonology is a sub-field of historical linguistics, which studies the sound system of a specific language or set of languages and change over time. Whereas phonetics is about the physical production and perception of the sounds of speech, phonology describes the way sounds function within a given language or across languages. (Wikipedia)

The study of sounds is called phonology. This sound system characterises the sound production. Each language has its own sound system and also sound production. The sound system shows how a language is formed in terms of sounds. There is another branch of sounds that learns about sound production, it is called phonetics.

An important part of phonology is studying which sounds are distinctive units within a language. For example, the "p" in "pin" is aspirated while the same phoneme in "spin" is not. In some other languages, for example Thai and Quechua, this same difference of aspiration or non-aspiration does differentiate phonemes. (Wikipedia)

English has its own sounds and also other languages. For non native English speakers, they may have some difficulties to pronounce some sounds as they are not accustomed to pronounced some sounds in the right way. Unless they live in the English speaking countries, they will produce the sound that is similar to the correct sounds.

In addition to the minimal meaningful sounds (the phonemes), phonology studies how sounds alternate, such as the /p/ in English, and topics such as syllable structure, stress, accent, and intonation. (Wikipedia)

The principles of phonological theory have also been applied to the analysis of sign languages, although the phonological units do not consist of sounds. The principles of phonological analysis can be applied independently of modality because they are designed to serve as general analytical tools, not language-specific ones. (Wikipedia)

English sounds have their own sounds pattern based on their structure, stress, accent and intonation. Principally, phonology also relates to the sign language although it does not consist of sounds. But the relationship gives benefits to see phonology as a tool to investigate sound patterns of a language.

e. Morphology

Morphology is the study of the formal means of expression in a language; in the context of historical linguistics, how the formal means of expression change over time; for instance, languages with complex inflectional systems tend to be subject to a simplification process. This field studies the internal structure of words as a formal means of expression. (Wikipedia)

Words as units in the lexicon are the subject matter of lexicology. While words are generally accepted as being (with clitics) the smallest units of syntax, it is clear that, in most (if not all) languages, words can be related to other words by rules. The rules understood by the speaker reflect specific patterns (or regularities) in the way words are formed from smaller units and how those smaller units interact in speech. In this way, morphology is the branch of linguistic that studies patterns of word-formation within and across languages, and attempts to formulate rules that model the knowledge of the speakers of those languages, in the context of historical linguistics, how the means of expression change over time. (Wikipedia)

Morphology is the study of the smallest meaningful units. It is a branch of linguistics. In morphology we can learn word formation process based on the part of speech. In word formation process, we can form words from morphemes. There are two types of morphemes, free and bound morphemes. The base, root or stem attached by morphemes will make a new word.

f. Syntax

Syntax is the study of the principles and rules for constructing sentences in natural languages. The term *syntax* is used to refer directly to the rules and principles that govern the sentence structure of any individual language, as in "the syntax of

Modern Irish". Modern researchers in syntax attempt to describe languages in terms of such rules. Many professionals in this discipline attempt to find general rules that apply to all natural languages in the context of historical linguistics, how characteristics of sentence structure in related languages changed over time. (Wikipedia)

Syntax is the study of how sentences are formed. The sentence is structured in grammatical way. It involves principals and rules for constructing sentences. English sentences must be grammatical, it means that sentences should be meaningful and follow the correct sentence pattern.

g. Conservative, innovative, archaic

The terms "conservative" and "innovative" are often used in historical linguistics to characterize the extent of change occurring in a particular language or dialect as compared with related varieties. In particular, a *conservative* variety has changed relatively less than an *innovative* variety. These descriptive terms carry no value judgment. A particularly conservative variety that preserves features that have long since vanished elsewhere is sometimes said to be "archaic". (Wikipedia)

Historical linguistics involves the development of science about language. There are many branches of linguistics and we can investigate the languages using comparative linguistics. There are some types that we can use in characterizing a language, like conservative, innovative and archaic. Those three terms are different in meaning, namely conservative means the variety of language is changed relatively, innovative means language variety always developed and archaic, it means the variety of language takes longer time than the other two.

CONCLUSION

We can learn a language from the vernaculars. There are variety of linguistics that can be analyzed in to trace back the origin of the language. The language takes spoken and written form, so that the speakers may use those two forms in communication. The historical linguistics prove that there are some characteristics of a language that characterize the language.

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