

THE NEW ARABIC LINGUISTICS THEORY

By, Dr. Jafar Dek El-Bab^(*)

1. My New general Linguistics Theory was originally named «the Modern Damascus Linguistics Theory», but I decided later to change the name to «the Modern Arabic Linguistics Theory» What follows is a brief introduction and elucidation of the theory.

2 - 1. I have used the functional descriptive method in my comparative study of the sentence structure of the Arabic and Russian languages⁽¹⁾. This method helped me arrive at a fuller understanding of the true originality of the Arabic language indicated by the structural qualities of this language. When we say a language is original, we mean that two elements contribute to the originality : a) that it is old; and b) that it is still a living language. Therefore, an original language should have a group of characteristics on the levels of phonology, morphology and syntax to indicate its history, such as the presence of onomatopaeic words which indicate the ancient sounds of animals and nature.

Arabic shows resemblance of many words and the sounds of animals and nature. This is an indication of its originality. The question to ask is whether the beginning of the Arabic language had anything to do with the beginnings of the human speech. The answer to such a question is the following, It is not easy to find a real language that contains the objective characteristics of the origin of the human speech of which it could be a characteristic sample. In principle, there is nothing that prevents carrying out a study on any natural language to examine whether its structure offers those objective characteristics⁽²⁾.

2-2. Is linguistics concerned with the question of the origins of the human speech ? In principle, yes, as long as it avoids the philosophical side of whether language is subject to inspiration from God or is a convention among people and concentrates instead on the set of rules that govern language. Since the language system consists of two sides : voice, i.e. physical and denotation, i.e. conventional, it is only natural that linguistic study of the beginnings of human speech should start from an analysis of the vocal aspect of language in order to arrive in the end at the analysis of the denotational aspect of it.

Therefore, the study of the beginnings of human language necessarily entails the study of the sound system, and should aim at answering the question of how the mental relationship between the various sounds that constitute the vocal utterances and the denotation of these utterances began. To answer this question I present a new theory about natural human language and its development in general linguistics and human cultural history, anthropology, philosophy, psychology and comparative theology.

3 . The New Theory on the Beginnings and Language of Mankind

3-1. The Philosophical Approach to the Theory

I adopt the theory of knowledge professed by the Arab philosopher Averroes⁽³⁾ which stems from a clear definition of the relationship between the human self and the object outside it and which shows that real knowledge is not just a mental image but corresponds to things in actual reality. Thus the source of human knowledge is the outside world.

(*) A former professor of linguistics at the Universities of Damascus and Algiers.

3-2. The Scientific Historical Method of Linguistic Study in the Theory

3-2-1. In relation to the philosophical approach which I have adopted a scientific historical method of language study based on a complementary combination of Ibn Jinni's theory of «Distinctive Features» in his book «Al-Khasais», and Abdul Qaher Al-Jirjani's «Clues to Supreme Eloquence» in his book «Dala'il al-I'jaz» was developed. The method stems from the following principles⁽⁴⁾.

First, the close relationship among speech, thought and communication ever since the appearance of human speech. The realization of mental relationship between sound and denotation had been the first step to the formation of human thought. Man came to pronounce sounds consciously in order to use them in communication, i.e. to transfer his purposes to the (minds of) others and to understand their purposes.

Second, human thought did not appear in its perfect form all at once, but rather its general progress proceeded from its realization of the tangible and concrete to the abstract. In the same way the linguistic system did not appear in its perfection all at once, but rather it began and developed gradually in a parallel line with the development and formation of human thought and its perfection.

Third, denial of synonymy as a basis for judging language by the number of lexical items and the inability to express. Ignoring the importance any language might gain by living a certain historical period in which it had served to crystalize within its structures certain values related to the material understanding of tangible values connected with the period preceding their development into a more abstract phase.

Fourth, the language system consists of a self-contained whole in which the hierarchical levels figure in mutual, reciprocal relationships to one another, and within which the sound structure occupies a basic and central level in relation to the higher language levels.

Fifth, when studying a language, we must pay special attention to what is general and constant

without ignoring exceptions and special cases which can be considered as evidence to a previous stage of language development, or forrunner of a future one. In such a way, we can study language in its synchronic and diachronic aspects.

3-2-2. The close relationship between speech and thinking and the function of interaction appears since the beginning of human speech through two connected relationships :

First, the relationship between speech and thinking in the conjunction of speech and the denotation it implies ; second, the relationship between thinking and the function of communication. The conjunction of speech, thought and the function of communication on the levels of both the individual word and the sentence.

4. Stages of the Formation and Development of Human Speech According to the Theory

4-1. In conformity with the close relationship between speech and thinking on the one hand, and thought and the function of communication on the other, we connect the beginning of human speech with the beginning of man himself. We define human language as «sounds pronounced consciously by man, in order to be used for transmitting his purposes to others for understanding their purposes in the context of co-existence and for forming his own thoughts and expressing his feelings»⁽⁵⁾.

It is worth pointing out here that the general features of human languages are defined by the things in common among all people, and which are summed up in the expression which defined man as a «social intelligent being capable of speech».

A review of the cultural history of mankind indicates that human thinking did not reach its perfection all at once, but rather followed the line by which man's conscious awareness through hearing and vision had reached its perfection by realization of the abstract. Language structure developed and claimed its perfect form gradually in a line parallel to that followed by human thought.

4-2. The beginnings of human speech did not necessarily follow the laws of logic, they rather followed a second system that depended on man's

ability to articulate sounds and the development of his ability to articulate. We point out here that the descriptive functional method is able to describe the language structure and point out its communicative function from a standpoint of the perfection of the language system-vocal, morphological and syntactic-connected with thinking in the abstract and the functions of the laws of logic. The scientific historical method indicates how the linguistic system reached perfection by connecting it with the development of man's ability to articulate sounds and to move from material perception and thinking to abstract thought.

4-3. «The realization of mental relationship between sound and what it indicates was at the beginning of human thought formation. This means that human speech passed a stage of primitive interaction in which the linguistic diction consisted of an imitation of animal sounds and natural phenomena. Such an imitation helped primitive man in the mental realization of the relationship between sound and what it indicated. After that came a second phase in which the imitation of animal and nature sounds ceased and a new root of language diction appeared in which the relationship between sound and denotation was arbitrary and depended upon human convention»⁽⁶⁾.

4-4. It is worth mentioning that we distinguish the origin of human language root diction from the root of morphological derivation, i.e. the grammatical : the morphological and syntactic systems of human language ; «the root of lexical elements of human speech is an inventory of the sounds of language which forms the rest of the lexical elements of this language on the one hand, and the denotations to which they point, on the other. The origins of morphological derivation in the linguistic system of grammar in the human language is the first linguistic formula. The development of which led to the development of the linguistic system of human language at all its levels»⁽⁷⁾.

In reference to this scientific historical method of study of the origins of human language, we find that the formula used first in the beginnings of human speech would have to have had the following features :

1. A word consisting of two voiced syllables
2. A word containing a sentence within the context of its use
3. To express the beginnings of thought based on visual perception
4. To carry out the first function of communication, i.e. a request or an order, as the request expresses a wish for mutual co-operation.

We find that these conditions are not met with except in the general form for a request, which is the imperative, addressed to a person facing the speaker, i.e. second person. Therefore, the first human linguistic formula was the general formula of the imperative addressed to a second person.

I disagree with the opinion prevalent in Arabic Linguistic Grammar (according to Al-Basra School) which says that the noun (or verbal noun) that is called infinitive in Arabic and expresses the meaning of the event outside the context of time and agent is the origin of derivation in the grammatical system of the Arabic language. I disagree because the noun, called infinitive, does not exhibit the four features shown above in the scientific historical method.

I also disagree with the opinion in the Arabic grammar (according to the Cufic School) which finds the root of the derivational system to be the indicative of the past of the verb for the third person **Kataba** «he wrote». I disagree because the formula of the indicative does not exhibit all four features mentioned above, and I insist that the origins of derivation in the grammatical system of Arabic is the general form of the imperative addressed to the second person which possess all four features of the method. This imperative expresses the beginning of thought based on a perceived realization between a speaker and an addressee in a time divorced from the past, i.e. the time of speaking, or slightly after, so it remains within the perceived realization. This means that the general form of the imperative is diachronically the first linguistic form. It was a word signifying an order to the second person without the utterance containing in its form an indication of gender or number of the second person. Thus it is a word that indicates an action without reference to gender or number of the action implied by it; therefore, it is a one-word sentence.

4-5. We affirm that the basic law for all human languages is the principle of articulating the elements of the voice chain to the sound syllables of which human speech consists⁽⁹⁾. Anthropological studies have established beyond doubt that the early man's larynx did not permit him to pronounce sounds that are not combined. This means that ancient man was not able to articulate the distinct sounds of which the utterance consisted. As the anatomical structure of human speech organs developed, he was able to change the pronunciation of the utterance by articulating it into distinct sound syllables. This began with the first human speech formula ; the general form of the imperative addressed to the second person singular pronounced by modern man in two distinct speech sounds which are combined in one. Thus human speech became distinct from sounds of ancient man and human language appeared in its present form.

4-6. Summary of the Beginnings and Development of Human Language According to the Theory⁽⁹⁾

Phase one. The period of aping animal sounds and the phenomena of nature. This went through two stages : First, the stage of ancient man prior to proper human speech, in which man, like animals, uttered vague sound groups, where the lexis appeared; this is not considered a proper human language, but a beginning of the distinction of the third person; second, the stage of the modern man who is able to articulate sounds and the beginnings of the disappearance of ancient man who is unable to articulate sounds into distinct syllables. This stage witnessed the beginning of human speech as we know it. In this stage, the first form of the imperative addressed to the second person, and the lexis appeared. The imitation of animal and nature sounds, which was not a human language formula, but a step toward the realization of the third person distinction.

Phase two. The stage of human convention which defined the relationship between speech sounds and their denotations. This stage began with the total disappearance of ancient man to be superceded by modern man, and terminated with the beginnings of

the perfection of modern man. Here a new lexical root appeared distinct from the first and the second as a human language formula which is the imperative of the second person.

5. The field of Application Envisaged to the Theory about the Beginnings and Development of Man and Human Language

The new general theory states that the basic law behind all human languages is the principle of speech sound articulation of the distinct syllables of which it consists, and implies a distinction of the lexical root from the linguistic root (grammatical : syntactic and morphological). The lexical root is an inventory of linguistic sounds of which the language consists on the one hand, and the denotations connected with them on the other. The root of linguistic derivation in the grammatical system is the first human language formula, i.e. the general form of the imperative addressed to the second person which implied a sentence within the context of its use. Therefore, we find that any human language grammar can be revised in its grammatical description (Syntactic and morphological) along the lines of the theory which considers the root of derivation in its grammatical system to be the general form of the imperative for the second person.

6. Suggested Projects

6-1. The formation of a research team to carry out a comparative study of Arabic and English which proceeds from the theory that the root of grammatical derivation in the grammatical system (morphological and syntactic) in all human languages is the general form of the imperative for the second person.

In the primary stage of the work program we propose a reconsideration of the description of the grammatical system in the morphology and syntax of the English language, assuming that the root of derivation is the general form of the imperative for the second person.

In the second stage of the research, a comparison between Arabic and English should be carried out.

In the third stage, we deduce from the comparative studies new methods to teach Arabic and English to non-native speakers and translate from and into these languages. Then syllables are to be devised to conform to the new methods, and textbooks to be designed accordingly.

6-2: The formation of a working group to design a new system for using the computer. The new theory states that the basic principle in all human languages is the division into the distinctive sound syllables, we suggest the formation of a totally different system

for the computer use ; therefore, the working group should include engineers and specialists in data processing as well as technicians to devise a new design for a computer that works according to the principle of the division of speech sound chain into distinct sound syllables combined with certain rhythms that pertain to the language in question. Success in devising this new design for the computer could open new phase for computer translation without limits and also development in research connected with artificial intelligence.



Notes

1. In my doctoral dissertation «Preliminaries for the Comparative Study of Word Order in the Sentence of the Literary Arabic Language and the Modern Literary Russian Language» 1973, which was written in Russian and awarded the rate of excellence.
2. «Towards a New Understanding of Linguistics» 1989. (in Arabic). Syria, Damascus : Al-Ahali Press.
3. «A Call Towards an Arabic Averoesian philosophy» 1989. In *Arabic Studies* 2 Beirut.
4. For further reference see my book «The Secrets of Arabic Language» 1990. (in Arabic) Syria, Damascus. Al-Ahali Press.
5. My book «Toward a New Approach to Linguistics» 1989. (in Arabic) Syria, Damascus : Al-Ahali Press, p.83.
6. ditto. ibid pp. 85-86.
7. My book «Toward a New Approach to Linguistics» 1989. (in Arabic) Syria, Damascus : Al-Ahali Press, p.84.
8. For further information see my article «The Arabic Tongue Retales the Story of the Beginnings of Man and Language» 1989. (in Arabic). In *Al-Lissan Al-Arabi* 33. Al-Ribat.
9. My book «Toward a New Approach to Linguistics» 1989. (in Arabic) Syria, Damascus : Al-Ahali Press, p. 87.