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The Foundations of Modern Western Linguistic Thought Between Outcomes the Inspirations are an Analytical Study from the Perspective of the Generative-Transformational School

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ABSTRACT: This research aims to analyze the foundations of modern Western linguistic thought in terms of its theoretical and applied dimensions. This is achieved by examining its developmental trajectory, including the outcomes resulting from its intellectual paths and the inspirations that formed a fundamental pillar in its expansion and development. The study's significance lies in its revelation of the dialectical relationship between Western linguistic theorizing, on the one hand, and the philosophical and epistemological frameworks that influenced its structure, on the other. The study focuses on the generative-transformational school as one of the most prominent contributions that brought about a qualitative shift in contemporary linguistic research.

The research adopted a critical analytical approach, based on an in-depth reading of modern Western linguistic texts and an examination of their philosophical and epistemological foundations, highlighting the extent to which these foundations influence the formulation of theories and the application of their findings. It concluded that generative-transformational grammar was not merely a descriptive project of language, but rather represented an epistemological vision seeking to uncover the underlying structure of language use, drawing inspiration from rationalist philosophy and modern epistemological trends.

The results confirm that modern Western linguistic thought oscillates between outcomes related to the limits of the generative-transformational model in its ability to provide comprehensive explanation, and inspirations that still constitute fertile ground for further research and renewal, making the study of these foundations a cognitive necessity for understanding the prospects of contemporary linguistics and its future paths.

KEYWORDS: Western linguistic thought, outcomes, inspirations, the generative-transformational school, critical analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Western linguistic thought witnessed a qualitative shift in its view of language, its functions, and its place within the system of human thought during the twentieth century. After language was studied from a descriptive, structural perspective focusing on its internal structure, as in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, attention shifted to approaching language from a generative, rational perspective with Noam Chomsky, who viewed it as an embodiment of an innate mental capacity manifested in humankind. Thus, modern linguistics became a field where philosophy, psychology, logic, and mathematics intersect, searching for the underlying laws of language as the most prominent manifestation of the human mind.

This shift took on a profound epistemological character, as linguistic study was no longer based on the superficial description of language, as in the structuralist school, but rather aimed to explain linguistic phenomena in light of the mental principles and cognitive capacities that enable humans to produce an unlimited number of sentences starting from a limited set of rules. From this emerged the generative-transformational school, which revolutionized the field of linguistics and changed the course of linguistic research in both the West and the Arab world.

The importance of this research lies in its attempt to analyze the foundations of modern Western linguistic thought by examining its ultimate conclusions and the intellectual insights it provided that influenced subsequent linguistic theories. Transformational generative grammar was not merely a new linguistic school of thought, but rather represented a comprehensive view of language as an inherent mental capacity, making it central to the development of cognitive linguistics and modern philosophy of language.

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The research problem revolves around the following question

To what extent have the foundations of modern Western linguistic thought, particularly the generative-transformational school, contributed to reshaping the theoretical conception of language from a rational and cognitive perspective? And what is the nature of the intellectual outcomes and cognitive inspirations that resulted from this transformation in Western and Arab linguistic studies?

From this problem, the following questions arise:

1.What are the main intellectual foundations upon which modern Western linguistics is based?

2.What are the core concepts established by the generative-transformational school?

3.What are the philosophical and epistemological implications of this theory in modern linguistic thought?

4.And how were these transformations reflected in contemporary Arabic linguistic studies?

This research aims to analyze the theoretical foundations that formed the basis of modern Western linguistic thought, and to reveal the cognitive transformations that resulted from the generative-transformational theory, while showing its impact on Arab linguistic thought, whether in terms of adopting some of its concepts, or criticizing and adapting them within the Arab-Islamic context.

The researcher will rely on the comparative analytical method, by analyzing linguistic concepts and issues in light of their philosophical and epistemological origins, and comparing the generative-transformational approach with other previous and subsequent linguistic approaches, thus providing a comprehensive view of the position of this thought within the course of the development of linguistic theory.

Many studies have previously addressed some aspects of generative-transformational thought, but most of them focused on the technical grammatical aspect without delving into the intellectual and cognitive backgrounds that established this approach. This research seeks to overcome this by addressing the relationship between theoretical premises and intellectual outcomes, and between the linguistic conception and the philosophical framing of the theory.

This study is expected to contribute to enriching the contemporary linguistic debate on the nature and function of language, and to highlight the importance of the generative-transformational school as a foundational stage in the construction of modern linguistics. It also highlights the limits of influence and inspiration in Arab thought, which sought to assimilate the Western approach and adapt it within its own vision.

The theoretical foundations of modern Western linguistic thought

Modern Western linguistic thought is the product of a long evolution of linguistic thinking, from its philosophical beginnings in ancient Greece, through comparative approaches in the nineteenth century, to the structuralist revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century, and then the intellectual shift with the generative-transformational school. The linguistic trajectory was not merely a theoretical accumulation, but a transformation in the epistemological perspective that defines the nature, function, and limits of language study. Hence the importance of this chapter in tracing the theoretical background that paved the way for modern linguistic thought and identifying its initial foundations before the generative shift.

Precursors of linguistic thought before structuralism

The study of language in Western thought did not begin with Saussure or Chomsky, but its roots extend back to Greek philosophy, which linked language to thought and logic. Plato, in his dialogue Cratylus , saw the relationship between word and meaning as a natural one, while Aristotle argued that it was a socially conventional relationship (Aristotle, 322 BC, p. 47). Since then, the question of the nature of language — is it a natural, social, or mental phenomenon? —has remained one of the central issues in human thought.

In the Middle Ages, language study was linked to school grammar. The scolast , which was based on the logic of philosophers and theologians, considered language a means of understanding sacred texts and philosophical thought. However, this conception remained confined to the normative framework and linguistic instruction rather than being an inquiry into the nature of language itself.

In the nineteenth century, with the rise of comparative studies in Europe, linguistic studies took a new turn with scholars such as Bass. Barnardt and Grimm, who laid the foundations of the comparative historical method, focused on phonetic evolution and linguistic relatedness among the Indo-European languages. European (Grim, 1822, p. 11). That stage was an important transition from an interest in the normative aspect to the scientific aspect, although the study remained more formal linguistic than cognitive.

Structuralist thought in Ferdinand de Saussure

Ferdinand de Saussure (F. de Saussure) came He established a new turning point in modern linguistics through his famous study, Lectures in General Linguistics. (1916), where he called for the study of language in and of itself, considering it a system of signs that forms a structure independent of the individual and society (De Saussure, 1916, p. 32).

Saussure was the first to accurately define bilingualism (Langue) And speech (Parole), emphasizing that the linguist's task is not to study individual phenomena but to deduce the general laws that govern the linguistic system. With this view, linguistic study moved from the historical aspect to the structural-descriptive aspect, where language became a closed system that can be analyzed as a network of relationships between linguistic units.

Saussure 's structuralist perspective was characterized by three fundamental pillars:

1.The descriptive approach is based on analyzing the internal relationships of language without resorting to history.

2.The structuralist perspective that sees language as a system of relationships, not just a list of words.

3.Binary analysis between signifier and signified, describing language as a symbolic system.

This structuralist perspective paved the way for the emergence of several linguistic schools, such as the Prague School, the Copenhagen School, and the Bloomfield School in America, all of which stemmed from the idea of a closed structure that could be studied independently of meaning or the mind. However, structuralism remained confined to superficial description without explaining how humans produce language or how they mentally comprehend it—a point Chomsky would later address.

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From Structuralism to Mental Transformation – Generative Grammar – Ephraim Noam Chomsky and the beginning of the revolution

By the middle of the twentieth century, the American thinker emerged Ephraim Noam Chomsky to lead an intellectual revolution that changed the course of linguistics. In his book, Syntactic Structures (1957) criticize Chomsky adopted the structuralist approach based on the superficial description of sentences, and he believed that the study of language cannot be separated from the human mind, because language is not merely an external structure but an innate mental ability that enables man to generate an unlimited number of correct sentences based on limited rules (Chomsky, 1957, p. 23).

Chomsky thus established what is known as transformational generative grammar, which is based on two fundamental principles:

•Generation: The ability of the grammatical system to produce an unlimited number of sentences.

•Transformation: Mental processes that transform deep structures into spoken surface structures.

Based on this view, Chomsky distinguished between two levels of language:

1.Language proficiency (Competence): It is the implicit knowledge of the linguistic system in the speaker's mind.

2.Linguistic performance: This refers to the actual use of that knowledge in daily communication.

With this perspective, Chomsky restored the role of reason in explaining linguistic phenomena, shifting linguistic study from the realm of external description to that of internal, rational interpretation, thus establishing what is known today as cognitive linguistics. He also reconnected language with cognitive psychology and analytical philosophy, making language a window into understanding the structure of the human mind itself.

The concept of language between system and ability

It is evident from the development of Western linguistic thought that language has shifted from being a formal system, as viewed by structuralists, to being an innate mental capacity, as viewed by generative grammarians. While Saussure focused on the internal relationships within the linguistic structure, Chomsky saw these relationships as manifestations of deeper mental mechanisms.

Thus, the central question in modern linguistics is no longer "How is language constructed?" but "How does man construct language?". Hence, linguistic research has taken an epistemological approach, aiming to understand the mental mechanisms that enable a child to acquire language without explicit instruction, indicating the existence of a universal grammar common to all humans (Chomsky, 1965, p. 40).

This shift has led to a redefinition of the nature of language as a universal human characteristic, making modern linguistics an interdisciplinary field where philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence converge. Thus, language has become not merely a tool for communication, but a system of mental knowledge that reflects the essence of the thinking human being.

Transformational Generative Grammar and its core concepts

The concept and origins of generative-transformational grammar

Transformational Generative Grammar emerged with the book Structural Structures In his 1957 work, "Syntactic Structures," Chomsky criticized structuralist approaches that limited themselves to classifying sentences without explaining the human capacity to produce them. He argued that language is not merely a set of ready-made phrases, but rather a generative mental capacity that enables humans to produce an unlimited number of correct sentences starting from a limited number of rules (Chomsky, 1957, p. 15).

"Generation" refers to the process that allows grammar to produce new sentences that have never been heard before, according to certain rules, while "transformation" refers to the processes that change the deep structure to a surface structure without affecting the basic meaning. For example, the sentence can be transformed:

" The student read the lesson " is transformed into an interrogative or passive form through mental transformation processes within the grammatical system itself.

Chomsky, therefore, sees grammar not as a description of language as it is used, but as a model of the mental mechanism that generates language in the human mind. This is what led him to consider linguistics a branch of cognitive psychology, not just a social science.

Efficiency and performance in generative thinking

Among the most prominent concepts that Chomsky introduced to linguistic studies are the concepts of competence. and performance (Performance) , and they express a fundamental distinction between implicit knowledge of language and its actual use .

Linguistic competence is the speaker's knowledge of the rules that govern his language, and it is an innate ability within the mind that enables him to form and understand an unlimited number of sentences.

Linguistic performance is the actual application of this knowledge in communication situations, and is influenced by external factors such as memory, attention, and psychological and social conditions (Chomsky, 1965, p. 41).

With this distinction, Chomsky separated what is mental and innate from what is practical and pragmatic, considering that the goal of the linguist is to study competence because it expresses the mental essence of language, while performance is subject to non-linguistic variables.

This distinction had a significant impact on the development of cognitive linguistics, as it opened the door to studying language as a mental knowledge system rather than merely acquired behavior, thus contradicting the behaviorist school that was prevalent in psychology at the time (Skinner, 195, p. 12).

Universal Grammar and Universal Grammar

At a later stage in the development of his theory, Chomsky formulated the concept of Universal Grammar. or Universal grammar refers to the set of general rules and principles common to all human languages. Humans are born with an innate linguistic structure that enables them to learn any language easily; this is known as "language faculty. "(Chomsky, 1981, p. 25)

According to this view, the child does not acquire language through imitation as the behaviorists say, but rather through activating the innate structure present in his mind when he is exposed to a specific linguistic environment.

This view has been supported by empirical evidence from psycholinguistics, where it has been observed that children in different languages go through similar acquisition stages, and that they are able to produce sentences they have never heard before, indicating the existence of internal rules not acquired by imitation.

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Therefore, universal grammar is the mental framework that governs all human languages, and the differences between them are not in essence but in surface standards, or what Chomsky calls Linguistic parameters (Parameters) This concept gave linguistics a new philosophical and epistemological dimension, as it made language a universal characteristic of the human species, not just a social system.

The relationship between language and mind

The concept of the relationship between language and mind occupies a central place in the generative-transformational school, which starts from the premise that language is an expression of an innate mental structure. Language is not a social product, as structuralism sees it, nor an acquired behavior, as behaviorism sees it, but rather a cognitive system that a person is born with. (Chomsky, 1972, p. 64)

From this perspective, Chomsky considered the study of language to be the best way to understand the nature of the human mind. Language reveals the deep structure of thought and the way the world is organized in the human mind. For this reason, he believes that linguistics should be closely linked to cognitive psychology, philosophy of mind, neuroscience, and even artificial intelligence, which seeks to mimic the mechanisms of human language. Chomsky expressed this connection by saying:

"The study of language cannot be separated from the study of the human mind, because language is essentially a system of knowledge" (Chomsky , 1980, p. 19) .

This conception had a profound impact on the subsequent development of cognitive linguistics studies, where the central question became: How is language represented in the brain? Instead of how is language used in society? This shifted the research from the social field to the cognitive-mental field.

The generative approach between science and philosophy

Despite its rigorous scientific nature, the generative-transformational school of grammar possesses a clear philosophical dimension, as it is based on intellectual conceptions of the nature of knowledge and human capacity. On the one hand, it employs strict methodological tools in constructing grammar, and on the other hand, it engages with questions of innate nature, the mind, and rationality.

This aspect has sparked a wide debate among researchers; some saw in Chomsky's theory a return to Cartesian rationalism, which makes reason the source of knowledge, while others considered it an advanced scientific model that is close to the approach of the natural sciences to phenomena (Kostler , 1983, p. 77) .

In any case, this combination of the scientific and the philosophical gave generative theory a dual character that made it capable of explaining the linguistic phenomenon in its various dimensions: structural, cognitive, and logical.

implications of generative thought

The generative-transformational school of linguistics, founded by Noam Chomsky, revolutionized the study of language, shifting it from a structural-descriptive approach to a rational-interpretive one that views language not merely as a product of the social environment, but as an innate faculty embedded in the human mind. This shift necessitated a re-examination of traditional concepts of language, mind, and knowledge (Chomsky, 1965, p. 9) .

This conception had a profound impact on redirecting the philosophical debate about the relationship between language and thought, as language was considered by the generative grammarians to be A tool for revealing the structure of the human mind. Linguistic knowledge is no longer just an accumulation of acquired rules, but a universal cognitive system that expresses the ability of man to generate an unlimited number of sentences starting from a limited number of rules (Chomsky, 1980, p. 34).

This perspective restored to philosophy the rational dimension that had been obscured by behaviorism and structuralism. Instead of language being a product of habit or response, it became a manifestation of mental creativity. Thus, generative grammar contributed to an epistemological shift in linguistic studies, moving the focus from "external language" to "internal language," which represents the cognitive structure of human thought. (15 p, 1975, Fodor).

The influence of the generative school on modern linguistic studies

The influence of generative grammar extended to various branches of contemporary linguistic research, forming the foundation upon which subsequent schools such as universal grammar, global grammar, and prescriptive grammar emerged. It also influenced the emergence of new approaches combining linguistics and cognitive psychology, paving the way for the development of cognitive linguistics in the 1990s. (Jackendoff , 1997, p. 22). The most prominent manifestations of this influence are:

1.The shift from description to interpretation: Linguistic study is no longer satisfied with describing phenomena, but rather seeks the mental rules that explain them.

2.Expanding the scope of linguistic research: by introducing new topics such as deep structure, mental representation, and mental processing of language.

3.The integration of language and mind: Linguistics has become a field of knowledge linked to cognitive science, artificial intelligence, and even analytical philosophy.

This shift has brought contemporary linguistics closer to cognitive science, and has broadened the concept of linguistic research to include the human being in his cognitive, psychological and social totality.

The impact of generative-transformational thought on Arabic linguistic research

Western linguistic thought, especially the generative school, has found a wide echo in contemporary Arab linguistic circles, where a number of Arab researchers have sought to adapt generative concepts in light of the Arab linguistic heritage. This represented a new stage of interaction between modern Western thought and Arab heritage, as we find in the works of Abdelsalam Al-Masdi, Tamam Hassan, Muhammad Al-Hanash, and others.

Al-Masdi says that generative grammar "presented a unique model for understanding language from within, which intersects with the conceptions of early Arab grammarians regarding competence and usage" (Al-Masdi , 1993, p. 48) . Meanwhile, Tamam Hassan believes that Arabic grammar

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carried the seeds of generative thinking since the concept of "analogy" and "root and branch," which makes it possible to establish an epistemological dialogue between the heritage and modern theory (Hassan, 1994, p. 122).

However, this interaction was not without its challenges. Several researchers pointed out the difficulty of applying generative grammar concepts to Arabic without epistemological and methodological adaptation, given that the Western linguistic context differs in its philosophical and methodological foundations from that of Arabic linguistic studies. Nevertheless, generative grammar contributed to shifting Arabic linguistic awareness towards more systematic and rational analysis, after it had long remained confined to the external description of texts.

Prospects for renewal in contemporary linguistic studies

It can be argued that modern Western linguistic thought, through the generative-transformational school, has opened new horizons for researchers in understanding language as a cognitive and intellectual system, not merely a means of social communication. Hence, the importance of drawing inspiration from this thought in developing contemporary Arabic linguistic studies becomes clear.

Drawing inspiration from this thought does not mean adopting it verbatim, but rather deconstructing and reconstructing it in light of the specificities of the Arabic language and culture. Just as structuralism served as an entry point for renewing linguistic research at the beginning of the twentieth century, transformational generative grammar can represent a starting point for a new Arabic linguistic project that balances authenticity and modernity, and heritage and contemporary life.

In this context, a number of Arab researchers call for the need to reformulate Arabic linguistics in light of the concepts presented by generative grammar regarding competence, deep structure, and linguistic mind, while preserving the methodological constants of authentic Arabic study (Al-Hanash , 2010, p. 63) .

The most significant epistemological outcome of this thought is the shift from understanding language as a closed system to conceiving of it as a mechanism for producing meaning in the mind, from external description to internal interpretation, and from partial study to a holistic, integrated perspective. These transformations represent a resource that Arab scholarship can draw upon to renew its tools and methodologies without losing its identity.

RESULTS

1.Modern Western linguistic thought is a product of the interaction between philosophy and science, and it has contributed to establishing the foundations of linguistics as a cognitive science that relies on mental modeling and not just on superficial observation.

2.Transformational generative grammar represented an epistemological turning point in the history of linguistics, as it shifted the focus from the structure of language to the structure of the mind.

3.Generative thinking has contributed to expanding the field of linguistic research, giving rise to what is known today as cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, and artificial linguistic intelligence.

4.The interaction of Western linguistic thought with Arab thought was mostly a critical interaction, through which Arab linguists tried to adapt modern concepts to suit the specificities of the Arabic language.

5.Transformational generative grammar is one of the most renewable theories, as it still forms fertile ground for dialogue between linguistics, philosophy and cognitive science.

CONCLUSION

This research has attempted to provide an in-depth analytical reading of the foundations of modern Western linguistic thought, in terms of its intellectual paths, epistemological premises and theoretical outcomes, in light of the generative-transformational school, which is considered one of the most important transformative milestones in the history of modern linguistics.

The research showed that Western linguistic thought was not a simple linear path, but rather the product of a philosophical and methodological accumulation in which the linguistic interacted with the cognitive, psychological, and intellectual. From the structuralist school, which established the concept of language as an independent system, to the generative school, which restored the importance of the intellectual dimension, the central question remained: How can we explain the human capacity to produce and understand language? (Chomsky, 1965, p. 11).

By analyzing the foundations of generative linguistic thought, it becomes clear that the fundamental shift brought about by this school lies in moving the focus from language as an external phenomenon to language as a mental capacity, and in considering linguistic competence as an innate ability that enables a person to generate an unlimited number of sentences in their native language. This shift has had a profound impact on the nature of linguistic research, as merely describing phenomena is no longer sufficient; rather, the goal has become explaining the underlying mental processes. (Fodor, 1975, p. 28).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.Expanding Arabic linguistic studies in light of the generative-transformational school, while considering the intellectual and methodological specificity of the Arab heritage.

2.Encouraging comparative studies between generative concepts and the principles of ancient Arabic grammar, to reveal the intellectual parallel between "competence" and "grammatical mastery" in the heritage.

3.Developing linguistics teaching curricula in Arab universities to include modern cognitive approaches that highlight the relationship between language and mind.

4.Establishing a balanced intellectual dialogue between Western and Arab linguistic thought, far from literal transmission or absolute rejection, in order to establish a contemporary Arab linguistic science.

5.Openness to cognitive science and artificial intelligence in the study of language, in line with modern trends that see language as a gateway to understanding the human mind.

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