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**1.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this unit, we shall

- discuss nature of language and linguistics
- differentiate between language and literature
- analyse how linguistics differs from language
- differentiate branches of linguistics

On completion of this unit, you should be able to

- understand and distinguish the nature of language and linguistics.
- understand the importance of the relationship between language and linguistics.
- differentiate branches, structure and substance of linguistics.
- apply some of the concepts of linguistics in writing effectively.

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## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In this course of '*Nature of Language and Literature*', we will look at various aspects of language and linguistics. Being human we all need to interact and communicate with the world via language. The language can be any of the language of expression. That can be any language that one uses. The purpose of this paper is to make you understand and distinguish the nature of language and linguistics. It is important for us to understand the relationship between language and linguistics. It becomes essential for the learners to study the fundamental concepts of linguistics and different branches of linguistics. Before we go through the detailed discussion, let us first understand the nature of language and linguistics which definitely, leads to linguistic competence. In other words, linguistics competence improves the language expression effectively.

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## **1.2 NATURE OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS**

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### **1.2.1 Nature of language**

Language is the most significant phenomenon in the world. From birth to death, all our activities are based on language. The human culture and knowledge are obviously, transmitted and stored in language. Thinking is only possible through language. Even we use language in our dreams. Language dominates every aspect of human life. Even deaf and dumb can communicate with language. Indeed, it is a yardstick to separate us from other beings. Language is a mean of communication. Only with the help of language, we can express our thoughts and feelings to others. Without language, society would be impossible.

#### **Some Definitions of Language:**

- "Language is the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area. Words and the methods of combining them for the expression of thoughts is language" according to Oxford English Dictionary
- "Each community is formed by the activity of language." Leonard Bloomfield
- "Language is a medium of communicative thoughts." according to Allen

- “Language is one of the most important and characteristic forms of human behaviour.” H.A. Gleason
- “Language is species specific.” Bolinger

Language is the most significant phenomenon in the world. From birth to death, all our activities are keeping pace with language. The human culture and knowledge are obviously transmitted and stored in language. People think and speak various languages according to their cultural differences.

e.g. The one who lives in England speaks English.

The one who lives in Sri Lanka speaks Swahili.

The one who lives in India speaks various languages like Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi, Marathi, Kannada, Gujarati, etc.

Language dominates every aspect of human life. Language is means of communication. Only with the help of language, we can express our thoughts and feelings to others. Without language, society would be impossible.

### **Nature of Language:**

1. **Language is learnt:** Learning any language is possible only if the person has passion towards it. Learning of language is not an automatic process. Noticeably, it is a behaviour but it is not that type of behaviour similar to walking or crawling that comes to child in natural way. It is a language by imitation and practice. Language learning is not possible without determination.
2. **Language is linked with the culture of the society:** Every single language is linked with the culture of society to which people belong to. The culture of the people is expected as the stimulus of the language. Every language is the product of society. We cannot separate language from the culture in which certain language exists. Here, language is only meaningful in relation to the particular culture and society.
3. **Language is species specific:** Animals and human beings both use language but it is species specific. Only the human beings have got the gift of language. Obviously, the other species like animals, do communicate but only human beings can use language.
4. **Language is species uniformed:** Human children are capable of obtaining any language natively if they are provided the right kind of environment. It should be uniformed.
5. **Language is a system:** There are different languages and each language has distinctive system. The system of language comprises of vocabularies, sounds and structures. A person who wants to learn a new language will have to learn new vocabularies, new sounds and new structures. The sound system of language differs from language to language depending upon the culture to which a language belongs. Each language has its own system of vocabulary. As a result, each language is systematic.

6. **Language is a system of systems:** There are phonological and grammatical systems in all languages. So, each language is a system of systems and there are numerous sub systems within a language. The phonology of a language forms its own system because the different sounds function in a systematic way.
7. **Language is a system of symbols:** Each language works through symbols. Each word used in a language has different symbols. They stand for definite things. The language will function well if its symbols are known to both the speaker and the person for whom they are being used.
8. **Symbols of language are vocal:** Different symbols are used in a specific language and these symbols are vocal. Vocals plays the most important role in speech. Only speech can provide all crucial signals of language. Though there are other kinds of symbols, but it cannot be called vocal symbols like signal flags and gestures because they are visual symbols. However, ringing of the bells and beating of a drum are auditory symbols. They do not form any language. In language, the sounds are produced through vocal organs. Reading and writing are no doubt important but speech is the basic form of language. A language without speech is absurd.
9. **Language is a skill subject:** Language is an art and learning of a language is subjected to skill. It is one of the skills like singing, dancing or stitching. We cannot learn singing, dancing or stitching just by studying rules. We can learn it by practice. In the same way, we can learn a language by continuous practice. Consequently, a lot of repetition for major linguistic skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing is required.
10. **Language is for communication:** Language is the best resource of self-expressions and communication. Human beings express their feelings, ideas, thoughts, and emotions through language. Therefore, language is the only means to connect present, past and future.
11. **Governed by a specific set of rules:** Each language is governed by a specific set of rules, for example, English language is governed by S. (subject) V. (verb) O.(object) and C. (Compliment). While framing sentence, we put subject, then verb and after verb, we put object or compliment.

**For example:**

Anita reads books.

Subject Verb Object

In contrast, Hindi or Sanskrit, language is governed by S.O.V. First, we put subject, the object and after object, we put verb.

Anita kitab padhti hai.

Subject Object Verb

12. **Symbols of language are Arbitrary:** Arbitrary symbols mean that there is no visual relationship between the language item and the object for which it stands. For example, child is called child traditionally because there is no pictorial comparison between the symbol 'child' and the genuine child. We have not named it so on the basis of some logic or scientific principles. In English, we say child, in 'Hindi' we say 'balak or bacchha'. None of them is better than the other. Actually, we call a child 'child' because people have agreed to use it in the same sense.

13. **Language is exclusive:** Each language is exceptional as it has its own unique elegance of functioning. The sounds, vocabularies, and structures of every language have their own specialty.

### 1.2.2 Nature of linguistics

Linguistics is the scientific study of human language. Linguistics is mainly divided into three categories or subfields of study: language form, language meaning and language in context. The first subfield of linguistics is the study of language structure or grammar. This emphasizes on the system of rules which is followed by the users of a language. It comprises the study of morphology. Morphology means the formation and composition of words. Syntax embraces the formation and composition of phrases and sentences from these words. Phonology is the sound systems. Phonetics is linked with branch of linguistics concerned with the actual properties of speech sounds and nonspeech sounds and how they are produced and supposed to.

#### Some Definitions of Linguistics

- Linguistics is the scientific study of human language.
- Language seems to be a section of our essential humanity.
- It is essential for humankind and has served to extend control of other creatures but then it is not easy to specify what exactly makes it distinctive.
- It helps as a means of intellect and communication.
- It enables us to think for ourselves and to cooperate with other people.
- It enables us to be proactive to create new meanings and shape our own reality at liberty by the immediate context.

Linguistics can be defined as all the below mentioned categories:

- **Academic discipline:** It is one of the bodies of knowledge given to or received by a learner, a branch, field of study or sphere of knowledge that an individual has chosen to specialize in.
- **Field of science:** It is broadly recognized category of specialized expertise within science. Usually, it embodies its own terminology and nomenclature where peers reviewed researches are published. It will normally, be represented by one or more scientific journals. There are many sociology-related to scientific journals.
- **Social science:** It is the field of academic scholarship that explores features of human society.

### **1.2.3 Difference between language and literature**

Literature is the written word whereas language is the written as well as spoken form. Language is a body of words and the systems for the common use of people who are from the same community or nation, the same geographical area or the same cultural tradition. Literature is a written form that introduces the reader to something new or shows them a different side of a familiar perspective that may in the form of a novel, poem, autobiography, biography, memoir or short story.

### **1.2.4 Difference between Language and Linguistics**

In the study of language, meaning is concerned with how languages work logical structures and real-world references to convey, process and assign meaning as well as to manage and resolve uncertainty. This category includes: the study of semantics shows how meaning is inferred from words and concepts; and pragmatics shows how meaning is inferred from context.

Linguistics is influenced by social, cultural, historical and political factors also. This includes the study of evolutionary linguistics that investigates into questions related to the origins and growth of languages; historical linguistics that explores language change; sociolinguistics that looks at the relation between linguistic variation and social structures; psycholinguistics that explores the representation and function of language in the mind; neuro-linguistics that looks at language processing in the brain; language acquisition on how children or adults acquire language and discourse analysis that involves the structure of texts and conversations.

Even though linguistics is the scientific study of language, a number of other intellectual disciplines are relevant to language and intersect with it. Semiotics means the over-all study of symbols and signs both without language and within language. However, literary theory studies the use of language in literature. Linguistics moreover, draws on and informs work from such diverse fields as anthropology, acoustics, biology, computer science, informatics, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology and sociology, speech-language pathology and human anatomy.

### **Check Your Progress-1**

i) What is linguistics? Explain how it differs from languages.

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ii) Define the nature of language and explain how it is learnt.

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### **1.3 THE BRANCHES OF LINGUISTICS**

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Language in general and particular can be studied from various points of view. Consequently, the field of linguistics as an entire can be categorised into some subfields in relation to the point of view which is adopted or the special emphasis that is given to one set of phenomena or assumptions instead of another.

The first difference is drawn between general and descriptive linguistics. General linguistics and descriptive linguistics are interrelated. Each depends, explicitly or implicitly upon the other: general linguistics supplies the concepts and categories in terms of which particular languages are to be analysed. Descriptive linguistics provides the data that confirm or refute the propositions and theories put forward in general linguistics.

The second difference is the branch of the discipline that deals with the details of the historical development of particular languages and with formulating general hypotheses about language-change is now known as historical linguistics. In historical linguistics, it is obvious that as in non-historical linguistics can be interested in particular languages or in language in general. The more technical terms are 'diachronic' and 'synchronic'. The diachronic description of a language suggests the records the changes and the historical development of the language that have been taken place in it between succeeding points of time. Therefore 'diachronic' is equivalent to 'historical'. A synchronic description of a language is non-historical so it presents an account of the language as it is at some particular point in time.

The third contradiction grips between theoretical and applied linguistics. In brief, theoretical linguistics studies language and languages with a view to constructing a theory of their structure and functions and not with reference to any practical applications. Whereas applied linguistics has as its concerns with the application of the concepts and findings of linguistics to a diverse practical task including language-teaching. The aim of theoretical linguistics is the construction of an acceptable theory of the structure of language in general. As much as applied linguistics is concerned, it is clear that it draws on both the general and the descriptive branches of the subject.

Finally, the fourth dichotomy has a narrower and a broader view of the scope of the subject. The terms 'micro-linguistics' is the one that adopts the narrower view and 'macro-linguistics' is the broader view. As micro means small or narrow and at its narrowest, micro-linguistics is concerned only with the structure of language-systems, without concern

to the way in which languages are acquired, used in their many functions or stored in the brain; without concerned to the interdependence of language and culture; without concern to the physiological and psychological mechanisms that are involved in language-behaviour. In a nutshell, without concerned to anything except the language-system, considered in itself and for itself. At its broadest, macro-linguistics is concerned with everything that apply in any way at all to language and languages. Some interdisciplinary areas should have been identified within macro-linguistics and is given a unique name: sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, stylistics and ethnos linguistics, etc. Linguistics has many branches therefore; the branches of linguistics are classified into different classes.

### **1.3.1 The Subfields of Linguistics**

- Generative linguistics
- Theoretical linguistics
- Cognitive linguistics
- Functional theories of grammar
- Quantitative linguistics
- Phonology

#### **Applied linguistics**

1. Computational linguistics
2. Language acquisition
3. Evolutionary linguistics
4. Forensic linguistics
5. Internet linguistics
6. Language assessment
7. Language development
8. Language education
9. Linguistic anthropology
10. Neurolinguistics
11. Second-language acquisition
12. Psycholinguistics

#### **Descriptive linguistics**

1. Anthropological linguistics
2. Comparative linguistics
3. Historical linguistics
4. Phonetics

#### **Graphemics**

1. Etymology
2. Sociolinguistics

### **1.3.2 Linguistic Structures are Studied**

The linguistic structures which are studied are the sub-fields of structure. They are focused linguistics which include the following:

- **Phonetics:** It is the study of the physical properties of speech or signed production and perception.
- **Phonology:** It is the study of sounds or signs as discrete. It is the study of abstract elements in the speaker's mind that distinguish meaning.
- **Morphology:** It is the study of internal structures of words and how they can be modified.
- **Syntax:** It is the study of how words combine to form grammatical sentences.
- **Semantics:** It is the study of the meaning of words/lexical semantics and fixed word combinations/phraseology and how these combines to form the meanings of sentences.
- **Pragmatics:** It is the study of how utterances are used in communicative acts and the role played by context and non-linguistic knowledge in the transmission of meaning.
- **Discourse analysis:** It is the analysis of language use in texts whether it is spoken, written or signed.

### 1.3.3 Linguistics Substance and Form

Substance is the material or important part of something as famous from form, which is the observation of a legal or technical manner or order. In some tax situations, the courts and the IRS look past the form to determine the substance of a transaction in order to find out what was done in fact instead of what the taxpayer contends occurred. In other situations, the form controls, even if the substance of the transaction could have resulted from a different form.

According to Standard Average European, language has two types of nouns that denote material parts of the world around us. Nouns in the first group is for example, “a plant”, “a book”, “a man” refer to definite objects that have a definite form. Nouns of the second group--like “coffee”, “water”, “milk”, “juice” and “meat”--denote homogeneous masses that do not have definite boundaries. There is a very clear grammatical difference between these groups: the nouns that denote substances do not have a plural case. In English the article before them is dropped, while in French the partitive article is placed in front of them. If we think deeply about the meaning of the difference between these two types of objects, nevertheless, it becomes clear that they do not differ from one another so clearly in reality as in language and probably, there is no actual difference whatever. Coffee, water, milk, juice and meat are found in nature only in the form of small or large bodies of definite shape. The difference between the two groups of nouns is depended upon us by language and often proves so inconvenient that we must use constructions for example, “slice of bread” or “cup of tea,” while the word “slice” does not indicate any definite shape and the word “cup”, can be though or it assumes a certain shape, introduces nothing but then confusion for the reason that when we say “cup of tea”, we have in our

mind that only a quantity of tea but not its shape in the vessel. Our language would not lose any expressive force if the word "meat" meant a piece of meat and the word "water" meant a certain amount of water.

This is exactly the case in the Hopi language. It is native North American language. In their language, all nouns stand for objects and have singular and plural forms. The nouns we translate, as nouns of the second group/substances do not refer to bodies that have no shape and size but to one where these characteristics are not indicated where they are ignored in the process of abstraction like the concept of "marble" does not indicate shape and the concept of "round" does not indicate size.

**Check Your Progress-2**

i) Name any five 5 subfields of linguistics.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Match the term

	A	B
i)	Phonology	It is the study of the meaning of words/lexical semantics and fixed word combinations/phraseology and how these combines to form the meanings of sentences
ii)	Phonetics	It is the study of how utterances are used in communicative acts and the role played by context and non-linguistic knowledge in the transmission of meaning
iii)	Syntax	It is the study of the physical properties of speech or signed production and perception.
iv)	Semantics	It is the study of sounds or signs as discrete. It is the study of abstract elements in the speaker's mind that distinguish meaning
v)	Pragmatics	It is the study of how words combine to form grammatical sentences.

iii) Fill in the blanks

- i) Hopi language is a \_\_\_\_\_.  
 ii) Standard Average European has \_\_\_\_\_.

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**1.4 LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE AND LINGUISTIC PERFORMANCE**

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Linguistic competence is the system of linguistic knowledge which is influenced by native speakers of a language. Though it is in contrast to the concept of linguistic performance and the way the language system is used in communication. This concept was first introduced by Noam Chomsky as part of the foundations for his Generative grammar, but it has since been adopted and developed by other linguists mostly those

working in the generativist tradition. In the generativist, tradition competence is the only level of language that is studied as this level gives insights into the Universal Grammar that generativists see as fundamental all human language systems. Functional theories of grammar tend to dismiss the sharp distinction between competence and performance and on the whole the primacy given to the study of competence.

Noam Chomsky distinguishes competence that is an idealized capacity from performance being the production of actual utterances. According to Chomsky, competence is the ideal speaker-hearer's knowledge of his or her language and it is the 'mental reality' that is responsible for all those aspects of language use which can be characterized as "linguistic". Chomsky claims that only under an idealized situation where the speaker-listener is unaffected by grammatically unconnected conditions for example, memory limitations and distractions will performance be a direct reflection of competence because natural speech which consists numerous wrong starts and other divergence will not deliver such data. As a result, he claims that a fundamental difference has to be made between the competence and performance.

Noam Chomsky dismissed criticisms of delimiting the study of performance in favour of the study of fundamental competence as unwarranted and completely misdirected. He claims that the descriptivist limitation-in-principle to classification and organization of data, the "extracting patterns" from a corpus of observed speech and the describing "speech habits" etc. are the fundamental factors that prevent the development of a theory of real performance.

According Noam Chomsky's theory, linguistic competence is unconscious knowledge of languages and is similar in some ways to Saussure's concept of langue, the organizing principles of a language. We actually produce, as utterances are similar to Saussure's parole and are called linguistic performance. The difference between linguistic competence and linguistic performance can be clarified by slips of the tongue, for example "noble tons of soil" for "noble sons of toil". Saying such, a slip does not mean that we do not know English but somewhat that we have simply made a mistake because we were distracted, tired or something else. This type of 'errors' also are not confirmed that you are assuming that you are a native speaker, non-native English speaker or that you do not know English or someone else does. It means that linguistic performance is different from linguistic competence. When we say that someone is a better speaker than someone else is. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, was a terrific orator, much better than you might be, however, these judgments tell us about performance but not of competence. Native speakers of a language whether they are famous public speakers or not but they don't know the language any better than any other speaker in terms of linguistic competence.

Moreover, two language users may have the same 'program' for carrying out particular tasks of production and recognition, but differ in their

ability to apply it because of some differences such as short-term memory capacity. The two-language user have similar language-competent but possibly not equally adapted at authentic use of their competence.

**Check Your Progress-3**

i) What is linguistic competence?

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ii) Who introduced linguistic competence concept first?

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**1.5 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit, you have learnt

- To distinguish the nature of language and linguistics.
- To understand what is linguistic competence and its uses in communication.
- To know various branches of linguistics

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**1.6 KEY WORDS**

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<b>Divergence</b>	difference between two or more things
<b>Language</b>	the principal method of human communication, consisting of words used in a structured and conventional way and conveyed by speech or writing.
<b>Linguistic</b>	a set of conservative symbols used for writing, based on a correlation between individual symbols and spoken sounds
<b>Perception</b>	the ability to perceive, mental grasp of objects, qualities, etc. by means of the senses
<b>Structures</b>	something arranged in a definite pattern of organization. a rigid totalitarian structures
<b>Syntax</b>	the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.
<b>Competence</b>	ability to use language successfully and effectively.

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## 1.7 SUGGESTED READING

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1. Ralph Fasold, Jeeff Connor: An Introduction to Language and Linguistics
2. R.L. Task: Key Concept of Language and Linguistics
3. Howard Jackson and Peter Stockwell: An introduction to the Language and Functions of Language

### ❖ ANSWERS

#### Check Your Progress-1

i) Linguistics is the scientific study of human language. Linguistics can be largely broken into three categories or subfields of study: language form, language meaning and language in context. The first subfield of linguistics is the study of language structure or grammar. This emphasizes on the system of rules followed by the users of a language. It includes the study of morphology which means the formation and composition of words, syntax includes the formation and composition of phrases and sentences from these words and phonology is the sound systems. Phonetics is a linked branch of linguistics concerned with the actual properties of speech sounds and nonspeech sounds and how they are produced and perceived.

The study of language meaning is concerned with how languages work logical structures and real-world references to convey, process and assign meaning as well as to manage and resolve uncertainty. This category includes the study of semantics shows how meaning is inferred from words and concepts and pragmatics shows how meaning is inferred from context.

Linguistics is influenced by social, cultural, historical and political factors also. This includes the study of evolutionary linguistics that investigates into questions related to the origins and growth of languages; historical linguistics that explores language change; sociolinguistics that looks at the relation between linguistic variation and social structures; psycholinguistics that explores the representation and function of language in the mind; neuro-linguistics that looks at language processing in the brain; language acquisition on how children or adults acquire language and discourse analysis that involves the structure of texts and conversations.

Even though linguistics is the scientific study of language, a number of other intellectual disciplines are relevant to language and intersect with it. Semiotics means the over-all study of symbols and signs both without language and within language. However, literary theory studies the use of language in literature. Linguistics moreover, draws on and informs work from such diverse fields as anthropology, acoustics, biology, computer

science, informatics, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology and sociology, speech-language pathology and human anatomy.

ii) Language is the most significant phenomenon in the world. From birth to death, all our activities are keeping pace by language. The human culture and knowledge and are obviously, transmitted and stored in language. Thinking is only possible through language. Even we make uses of language in our dreams. Language dominates every aspect of human life. Indeed, it is a yardstick to separate us from other beings. Language is means of communication. Only with the help of language, we can express our thoughts and feelings to others. Without language, society would be impossible.

**Refer: Nature of Language (1.2.2)**

**Check Your Progress-2**

i) The subfields of linguistics

1. Theoretical linguistics
2. Generative linguistics
3. Cognitive linguistics
4. Functional theories of grammar
5. Quantitative linguistics or Phonology

ii) Match the term

i) Phonology: It is the study of sounds or signs as discrete. It is the study of abstract elements in the speaker's mind that distinguish meaning.

ii) Phonetics: It is the study of the physical properties of speech or signed production and perception.

iii) Syntax: It is the study of how words combine to form grammatical sentences.

iv) Semantics: It is the study of the meaning of words/lexical semantics and fixed word combinations/phraseology and how these combines to form the meanings of sentences.

v) Pragmatics: It is the study of how utterances are used in communicative acts and the role played by context and non-linguistic knowledge in the transmission of meaning.

iii) Fill in the blanks

i) Hopi language is a native North American language.

ii) Standard Average European has two types of nouns

### **Check Your Progress-3**

i) Linguistic competence is the system of linguistic knowledge influenced by native speakers of a language; it is in contrast to the concept of Linguistic performance, the way the language system is used in communication. The concept was first introduced by Noam Chomsky as part of the foundations for his Generative grammar. Linguistics performance has the two senses:

1. A technique used in phonetics by aspiring practitioners of the subject is trained to control the use of their vocal organs.
2. A term used in the linguistic theory of transformational generative grammar refers to language being seen as a set of specific utterances produced by native speakers.

ii) Linguistic competence concept was first introduced by Noam Chomsky as part of the foundations for his Generative grammar.