

# LINGUISTIC METHODS

# Common Methods with other Sciences

The common methods with other sciences are: induction, deduction, observation, the experiment, statistical method, etc.

**Induction** supposes the study of the accessible phenomena of observation by formulating a rule, a law. A relatively reduced number of phenomena is investigated taking into account “all the imaginable possibilities in the framework of certain limits”.

**Deduction** takes as the starting point or laws after which the explaining of particular phenomena takes place.

**Observation** implies the selection and the primary interpretation of the language phenomena.

**The experiment** represents the investigation of a phenomenon “provoked under known conditions” that can be modified according to the necessary objectives.

# Traditional Methods

The traditional methods are:  
comparative-historical, descriptive,  
contrastive-typological, the method of  
linguistic geography, the method of  
the experimental phonetics.

# The Comparative-Historical Method

It was founded on the basis of the diachronic comparison. It reflects the material similarity of generical related languages. It aims at the evidentiating of the common tendencies in the development of the languages of the same origin. The founders of the method are:  
Fr. Bopp, R.Rask, J.Grimm, Fr. Diez,  
A.Vostokov, A.Schleicher, A.Meillet, etc.

The method is based on the following **principles**:

1. Arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, i.e. the report between the sound/sign and the meaning is conventional, arbitrary. As a result one and the same signifier correlates with different significant, f.e., Rom *copil*; French *enfant*; Italian *bambino*; German *Kind*, Russian *дутья*, etc.
2. The generic related languages originate from an old common language, relatively unique. A. Schleicher considered that all the Indo-European languages originated from an old-old language which was divided into basic languages, ramifications of related languages and their dialects. The neogrammarians K. Brugman and B. Delbruck considered that old language could be a variety of related dialects. A.Meillet considered this language a total correspondence from different levels: phonetic, lexical, morphological and syntactic.

3. The comparative-historic method supposed regular phonetic correspondences, f.e. [pt] from Romanian which originated from Latin [ct] corresponds to [tt] from Italian , [ts] – Spanish], [it] – French in L. *factum*; Rom. *Fapt*; It. *Fatto*; Sp. *Hecho*; Fr. *Fait*.
4. The comparative-historical method may be applied due to the division of the basic language or of the old language into cognate languages. Thus, the Indo-European language generated due to linguistic divergences the Romance languages, Germanic, Celtic, Slavonic, Indian, Iranian, Baltic etc.
5. The origin language may be reconstructed, especially the phonetic, syntactical and morphological ones. In the comparativistic studies from the end of the XX-th century the analysis of the archaisms and the innovations were taking into consideration the internal reconstruction of the units.

The comparative-historical method uses the following **procedures**:

- the selection of the linguistic material, the archaic forms being studied omitting the borrowed elements;
- the established comparative units and their identification;
- the diachronic comparison based on comparing of the facts from the related languages.

In the XX-th century the comparativistics and the indo-europenistics attest remarkable results.

The historical-comparative method also has some **deficiencies**:

- it operates with phenomena from the related languages with a different chronological period;
- as the syntax is subject to some foreign influences to a greater extent in comparison with the morphology of the languages, the application of this method in syntax presents some difficulties;
- this method can't be used with the isolating languages (Chinese, Tibetan, etc.).



# The Contrastive-Typologic Method

The contrastive-typologic method is based on the typological comparison of related and unrelated languages. It was founded by A.Schlegel, W.von Humboldt, A.Schleicher and H.Steintal.

In Russia this method was perfected by I.I.Mescianinov, V.N.Jarteva, V.Uspensky, Ju.Rojdestvensky, V.Scalicka, F.N.Greenberg, E.Sapir, T.Milewssky, etc.

It evidenced both isomorphic and allomorphic formations of the world languages operating also with the term “linguistic type”.

## **The main procedures** of the method are:

- the selection of the linguistic material in order to reveal the analogies and divergencies of the structure of the confronted languages;
- the confrontation of phenomena of the basic language with those from the target language.

The areal comparison reveals the structural analogies and also the lexical and morphologic ones. In special literature these analogies of “the linguistic balcanic union” including the Romanian, Neogreek, Albanese, Macedonian, Bulgarian are described such as: postposition of the definite article, formation of the future Indicative with the auxiliary verb “will” and its equivalents in the other Balcanic languages, the synchretism of the Genitive and Dative, etc.

# Method of the Linguistic Geography

This method studies the spatial repartition of the linguistic phenomena.

It was founded by J.Gillieron, G.Wenker being revised by A.Dauzat, M.Bartoli, V.Jirmunsky, E.Cosheriu.

The method of linguistic geography includes **multiple procedures**:

- the formation of a questionnaire about the investigated problems;
- the selection of the linguistic phenomena by this questionnaire;
- the registration of the selected material on the maps;
- the creation of the linguistic atlases;
- the interpretation of the linguistic material, etc.

Linguistic geography reveals the synchronic and diachronic aspects of the languages. The first determines the dialects, the second evidentiates the innovations and archaisms of the studied languages. Prof. E.Cosheriu underlines that “every word has its history” but “the history of the words can’t substitute the history of the languages”.

# The Experimental Phonetics

The method “Experimental Phonetics” studies the sounds of the languages under consideration with special apparatus (oscilographs, etc.) for the registration of the acoustic and articulatory particularities.

This method was founded by P.Rousselot, perfected by M.Grammont (France), S.Carcevsky, V.A.Bogoroditsky, L.V.Scherba (Russia), E.Petrovici (Romania), K.L.Pike (USA), who investigated the process of study not only of their native language but also of the foreign languages.

# Modern Methods

The modern methods are: the distributive analysis, the method of immediate and ultimate constituents, the transformational method, etc.

The distributive method was founded by Z.Harris. He established the distribution of the language elements in relation to each other. There are some distributive models: contrastive distribution, complementary distribution and free variety.

The contrastive distribution is connected with different phonemes, f.e., man, can, ran; rare, dare, care, etc.

According to the distributive analysis of languages, f.e., the sign itself is the material sound sequence and if language is a system of signs, the only task linguistics can have is to examine these signs according to their places in the system. This is called the distributive analysis of the language, so to say, the formal behavior of different phonemes.

Z.Harris in his work “Methods in Structural Linguistic”, Chicago, 1951, p. 5, holds that distribution is “the freedom of occurrence of portions of an utterance relatively to each other”. The distribution of an element will be understood as the sum of all its environments.



# Transformational Analysis

The essence of the Transformational Analysis is:

the transformation of the structures, sentences occurring in different linguistic utterances as a result of single- or multistage transformation of a few other segments or sentences called nuclear or kernel sentences. Every complicated sentence can be reduced to a few kernel sentences, and with this procedure transformational analysis becomes a transformational schema seeming fit to generate an infinite number of linguistic utterances of the varied construction.

# The Method of Immediate and Ultimate Constituents

The Method of Immediate and Ultimate Constituents was founded by the representatives of structural American School L. Bloomfield, E.Nida, R.Wells. The basic principle is the binary division into segments, it uses the terms: constituent, immediate constituent and ultimate constituents. The division into ICs and UCs can be carried out on the basis of two principles: 1) the affix principle, f.e., useless, hopeless, merciless; 2) the root principle, f.e., root morpheme agree: agreeable, agreement, disagree. This method has such procedures in segmentation:

Friendliness

Friendly + ness

Immediate Constituent

Friend + ly

Ultimate Constituents