**What is Linguistics ?**

Linguistics can be defined as “the systematic study of language, a discipline which describes language in all its aspects and formulates theories as to how it works”.

- A linguist describes languages, but does not prescribe (dictate) how to use them.

- All languages, and all aspects of a language, are interesting and worth in-depth analysis.

- Languages change constantly.

- Spoken and written language need to be analyzed separately.

**Linguistics differs from traditional grammar in a number of respects:**

1. Linguistics is descriptive whereas traditional grammar is prescriptive

2. Unlike traditional grammar, linguistics does not force any language into the framework of another.

3. Traditional grammarian is known for their interest in studying written language only. In contrast, linguists tend to be interested in analyzing both written and spoken forms of language.

**Scope of Linguistics**

- Linguistics covers a wide range of topics and its boundaries are difficult to define.

- Language can be analyzed at a single point in time (synchronic linguistics), or its development over a number of years can be studied (diachronic linguistics).

- The word grammar in this textbook is conceptualized as to sound patterns, word patterns and meaning patterns combined, and not word order and word endings only.

- Linguistics comprises several sub-disciplines that link linguistics to the neighboring fields of knowledge, as shown in the diagram below.



**What is Language?**

-There are several intrinsic features that distinguish human language from other communication systems.

- These intrinsic features are the use of sound signals, arbitrary relation between sounds to messages, displacement, duality, the need for learning, creativity, patterning of units and structure dependence.

- The sound sequences used in language are arbitrary: mostly, there is no link between the sounds and the message being conveyed.

- Language is double-layered. A stock of basic sounds is combined into larger units.

-Double-layering makes language flexible and powerful.

- Language can communicate about people and events removed in time and place.

- Human language is ‘creative’, as unlimited number of new utterances can be produced.

- The creativity of human language is based on the changes made within a finite number of patterns and how these patterns are arranged together.

- Language can then be defined as “a patterned system of arbitrary sound signals, characterized by structure dependence, creativity, displacement, duality and cultural transmission”.