Mustansiriyah University

College of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

3rd Year Linguistics

Textbook: Linguistics (Aichison, 2010)

Lecture 1: What is Linguistics?

- The aim of this lecture is to introduce the students to introductory information about linguistics and how it differs from traditional grammar.

- 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.