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# Linguistics and Its Relationship with Philology

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**ANNOTATION:** In this article, we explore the arguments concerning the disciplinary of linguistics and philology as fields of academic knowledge. We begin with a brief historical overview of philology and linguistics. We then consider the question of whether linguistics and philology in the twenty-first century should be viewed as separate disciplines, as overlapping disciplines or whether one discipline-philology-should be viewed as a superordinate discipline which subsumes linguistics.

**KEYWORDS:** linguistics and philology, the arguments concerning the disciplinary, among the leading historical linguists

I don't see what Prof. Chandler-Burns' discussion of the ill-definition of the term morpheme has to do with the question of how different people use the term philology. If he bemoans the fact that many linguists have turned away from historical linguistics, I agree, but to attack Bloomfield or Saussure on this point is inappropriate given that they were among the leading historical linguists of their times and indeed of all time and moreover like Sapir, Paul, Whorf, Humboldt, Greenberg, and others, they represented precisely the kind of linguistics, so rarely practiced today but by no means extinct, in which the leaders of the field were always BOTH comparativists AND theoreticians. Saussure's views on the subject of synchrony and diachronic are a technical subject although not a hard one, and there is no relation between them and the bowdlerization, invented I suspect by people who have not read a word of what he published in his lifetime, which holds that he erected some kind of barrier between them or that he in any way denigrated diachronic. As some of you do know, every single thing he published was actually on IE comparative linguistics. It is also kind of ironic to see that in this day and age, when in fact there is a shortage of people like that and historical linguistics is under siege, we need to have critiques of Bloomfield or Saussure, whose works hardly any student of ling is ever introduced to in the first place. If someone is unhappy with the state of linguistics today (as I am certainly), she should pray for a couple of Saussure's or Bloomfield's to come to our rescue.

So, what is the difference between philology and linguistics (and, how can a philologist/linguist be--or be considered to be--a historian)? The difficulty in defining the difference is that the two fields partly overlap. Philology is essentially the study of texts, for whatever purpose the investigator has in mind. There are certain techniques, more or less scientific (i.e., involving measuring and counting), such as paleography and critical edition, that are largely used only by well-trained philologists--and thus, not by linguists. Also, the texts are nearly always pre-modern (the author[s]--and often the languages--are generally dead), and the investigation can, and often does, use practically any disciplinary approach known to modern academia--from anthropology to zoology--in order to elucidate the texts and languages of the texts. Conclusions drawn from this empirical study are often used by philologists in "comparative philology" or "historical-comparative philology," a sub-branch of the field which is, essentially, pure linguistics (I'm coming to that). I.e., these specialists are interested in the reconstruction of earlier stages of the languages they work with, and use strictly linguistic methodology--"Basic Linguistic Theory," as I think it's called by R.M.W. Dixon in his recent book *The Rise and Fall of Languages*, incidentally an impressive, thoughtful book that covers both "linguistics" and "comparative-historical philology". However, many philologists work primarily in literature, or history, or--most frequently--in a foreign language department, i.e., some other viable academic field where they can find work, because philology today has retreated so far under the pressure of linguistics that it is no longer represented as an academic unit per se in American universities (at least not to my knowledge). It is, instead, taught in language departments. For example, Indo-European comparative-historical philology--i.e., more or less the same field as comparative-historical linguistics--is generally a subject that may be studied by taking courses in the Romance, Germanic, Slavic, etc. language departments of a university, which generally include one or more historical linguists who have specialized in the respective language families within Indo-European, and ideally have themselves learned Indo-European historical philology/linguistics too. (In some cases, even non-Indo-European language departments include one or more historical philologists/linguists.) Of course, in some universities the modernists were a little too successful, and such things may not be taught at all, or at least not taught sufficiently well so that a young student can learn what needs to be learned. Now, for linguistics. The discipline of linguistics is a modern development, as someone in the discussion has already



noted. Although even Saussure was a historical philologist, the split between linguistics and philology would seem to have begun around his time. (Perhaps a historian of linguistics can clarify this point.) Although the Neogrammarians--the Indo-European historical philologists who developed the first "linguistic" theory--were essentially simply historical linguists, the idea of linguistics as something different from philology TODAY is based on the idea that "linguists" have theoretical and methodological training in the "scientific study" of language, both "Language" in general and languages, especially modern spoken languages. The focus on theoretical rigor--an idea actually established by the Neogrammarians, though most linguists today are unaware of the fact--is primarily what, to linguists, distinguishes them from philologists. While this is certainly untrue today, when historical philologists are simply the same as historical linguists--both use essentially the same methodology and theoretical framework, regardless of quibbles-- it is notable that linguistics has developed many subfields devoted to questions largely ignored by the earlier (not modern) historical-comparative philologists, such as syntax, typology, pragmatics, semantics, and so forth. Many of these subfields have developed their own jargon and theoretical frameworks, such that other linguists are unable to understand their work at all. (This is, of course, not accidental in the academic world...) It is probably safe to say that most of these subfields are of little interest to the vast majority of comparative-historical philologists, whose main interest coincides with the main interest of most comparative-historical linguists, namely, reconstruction of the earlier stages of languages they are interested in. There is much more that can be said, so I may have overlooked something important, but I think that basically covers it. In short, philology focuses on the study of TEXTS, and includes many disciplines (linguistics [increasingly including subjects studied in the subfields of linguistics], study of particular languages and language families, language pedagogy, literature, history, art, music, anthropology, etc.), while linguistics focuses on the study of LANGUAGE, and includes many sub disciplines (phonology, syntax, pragmatics, typology, historical linguistics, study of particular languages and language families, applied linguistics [i.e., language pedagogy and especially the THEORY of language pedagogy!], etc., to the exclusion of other disciplines such as those listed above under philology). As a final note to those wondering how to do it today, in most cases a student should be advised to do a double Ph.D., i.e., a simultaneous Ph.D. in the linguistics department and one in the language department of choice. This should provide the best professional training for an academic career.

The traditional areas of linguistic analysis include phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Each of these areas roughly corresponds to phenomena found in human linguistic systems: sounds (and gesture, in the case of signed languages), minimal units (words, morphemes), phrases and sentences, and meaning and use.

Linguistics studies these phenomena in diverse ways and from various perspectives. Theoretical linguistics (including traditional descriptive linguistics) is concerned with building models of these systems, their parts (ontologies), and their combinatorics. Psycholinguistics builds theories of the processing and production of all these phenomena. These phenomena may be studied synchronically or diachronically (through history), in monolinguals or polyglots, in children or adults, as they are acquired or statically, as abstract objects or as embodied cognitive structures, using texts (corpora) or through experimental elicitation, by gathering data mechanically, through fieldwork, or through introspective judgment tasks. Computational linguistics implements theoretical constructs to parse or produce natural language or homologues. Neurolinguistics investigates linguistic phenomena by experiments on actual brain responses involving linguistic stimuli.

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