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Исследовательская работа (эссе)

**«Роман Якобсон и его роль в развитии лингвистики:
новаторство и влияние на современное языкознание»**



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Team essay competition “Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-speaking World. Time for Equal Opportunities”

Research paper (essay)

“Roman Jakobson and his role in the development of linguistics: innovation and influence on modern linguistics”



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Theses:

- I. Introduction
- II. Biography
 1. Background and inheritance
 2. Education. Interest in languages
 3. Prague Linguistic Circle
- III. Scientific activity
- IV. Conclusion

Roman Jacobson was a Russian and American famous linguist who paved the way in the development of structural linguistics in the twentieth century. He is considered to be a pioneer whose approach had a great and lasting influence on other well-known linguists, anthropologists, and literary critics. Besides, he was one of the scientists who stood at the very beginning of phonology as it is understood and practiced nowadays. And it was he, who managed to develop a communication model, which became a cachet of his approach. Roman Jacobson worked in various countries, most notably Czechoslovakia and the United States. In the early period of his long career he was one of the leading representatives of the Prague Linguistic Circle; later his writings reflected a new stage in the development of structuralism, revealed after World War II. So as I am interested in learning languages, I do my best to get acquainted with scientific works of linguists.

Roman Jacobson was lucky enough to be born as one of those happy people who were born “with a silver spoon in the mouth” in accordance with their upbringing, education, and environment. Future linguist was born in Russia in the city of Moscow on October 10, 1896 into a family of a chemical engineer and a merchant of the first guild. Such a combination was not common, but highly promising. His mother was a musician. The boy was inquisitive. As to the political situation in the world and in Russia in particular, it was rather calm. So the family had every possible opportunity to give their son an excellent education. A pragmatic mind and a craving for the sublime became tightly fused in the nature of Roman Osipovich Jacobson.

In his early years he learned to speak Russian and French. He became fluent in six languages: Russian, French, Polish, German, Czech and English. For besides he had basic knowledge to defend himself using Norwegian and Finnish. These languages he even used to teach some classes.

Poetry and literature were present in Roman Jakobson's life from an early age. His parents arranged for him various recitals, influencing his literary work to initially deal with futurist-style poems.

As to his education Roman Jakobson achieved his academic degree in Moscow, at Lazarev Institute for Oriental Languages. Then he got a master's degree at the Faculty of History and Philology of Moscow University in 1918 and finally obtained a doctorate at the University of Prague.

During his student years he was a leading figure in the Moscow Linguistic Circle and participated in the active world of avant-garde art and poetry in Moscow. The linguistics of the time were overwhelmingly neogrammatical and insisted that the only scientific study of language was the study of the history and development of words over time. Jakobson developed an approach focused on how the structure of language fulfills its primary function (the synchronic approach) - to transmit information between speakers. Starting from 1920 Jakobson spent most of his life outside Russia due to the political events of the time. He went to Prague as part of a Red Cross mission. His goal was to improve his knowledge of the Czech language and to familiarize himself with the latest achievements of European science. Jakobson was also engaged in replenishing the scientific libraries of Moscow and Leningrad and supplying his colleagues back home with the latest Slavic literature.

In 1926, the Prague Linguistic Circle was founded by a collaboration of Czech, Slovak and Russian linguists. Thanks to Jakobson, the "Proceedings" of the circle were published. At the same time, the scientist actively promoted the ideas of the circle at general linguistic, phonological and Slavic world congresses, where he was one of the main speakers and inspirers of discussions. In the works of the Prague Linguistic Circle two directions of modern linguistics converged: the direction associated with the name of F. de Saussure and the direction associated with I.A. Baudouin de Courtenay, who laid the foundations of phonological theory, followed by Jakobson and Trubetskoy.



In 1941, Jakobson left Europe and moved to New York. In the USA, he creates most of his linguistic, psycholinguistic and literary works and teaches at the best American universities - Columbia and Harvard.

From 1957 he taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. From that time on, Jacobson began to focus on establishing the broadest possible links between linguistics and other sciences, opposing any form of isolationism. From 1956, Jakobson traveled frequently to the USSR. His reports and lectures, his participation in many scientific congresses in Moscow, Leningrad, Tbilisi played a great role in the development of linguistics and semiotics. He also familiarized the world science with the achievements of Soviet linguistics.

In a study devoted to a comparison of the Russian and Czech systems of versification, Jakobson focuses on the sound segments of words, called phonemes, which have no meaning of their own, but their sequences are the most important means of expressing meaning in language. His interest in the

sound side of language led Jakobson together with the participation of N. S. Troubetzky to the creation of a new branch of linguistics - phonology. Jakobson established 12 binary acoustic features that constitute phonological oppositions, which, according to him, are linguistic universals underlying any language.

The foundations of another new trend in science - neurolinguistics - were laid in Jakobson's work on aphasia (1941), in which he linked speech disorders with neurological data on the structure of the brain. This research provided the physiological justification for his doctrine of metaphor (axis of combination) and metonymy (axis of selection) as the two main opposing ways of ordering linguistic units, also defining the distinction between poetry and prose. This opposition soon became an integral part of the terminological apparatus of modern literary studies

R.O. Jakobson's legacy is enormous. He wrote dozens of works on phonology, morphology, syntax, poetics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and philosophy of language. Jakobson's basic ideas in linguistics still play an important role in such fields as linguistic typology and linguistic universals. Jakobson worked at Harvard until 1967, when he was appointed Professor Emeritus. From that moment he was in charge of giving talks and conferences in different institutions. He had the honor of being able to speak at Yale, Princeton or Brown.

R.O. Jakobson died at the age of 85 at the Massachusetts General Hospital, located in the city of Boston.

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