2. 1:The Theory of Language Structure

Any adequate Theory of Language Structure must provide answers to questions such as the following:

(i)What is language?
(ii) What is it that you know when you a language?
(iii) What are the essential defining characteristics of natural languages which differentiate them from, for example, artificial languages like those used in Mathematics or Computing ,or from animal communication systems?
(iv)Do languages differ from each other in unpredictable ways ,or do they all share certain common, universal properties?

In order to attempt to develop a Theory of Language Structure ,we first formulate detailed descriptions of *Particular Grammars* such as English for instance. When we have compiled detailed grammars of a number of different languages , we abstract from particular grammars common, universal properties that they all share: this is the study of *Universal Grammar*-i.e. the search for linguistic universals. In other words ,the task of the linguist is to formulate grammars of particular languages (=the study of *Particular Grammars*),and to abstract from these sets of common principles which form the basis for the study of *Universal Grammar*.

Considering what it is that a grammar of a particular language sets out to describe, Andrew Radford (1989) says that Chomsky gives an essentially mentalistic answer to this question :"for him, a grammar is a *model* (= systematic description) of those linguistic abilities of native speakers of a language which enable them to speak and understand their language fluently." (3) These linguistic abilities are called the *competence* of the native speaker. Thus, "*a grammar* of a language is a model of the linguistic competence of