PART II. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS

KEY TOPIC(S):
- Twentieth-century linguistics.

READING ASSIGNMENT 11
The purpose of this reading assignment is to help you to become familiar with the development and current scope of linguistics (Modern Linguistics), from the pioneering statements of Ferdinand de Saussure to the present day, in particular recognizing the influential role played by Noam Chomsky in giving direction to the modern subject, and the various points of contact the subject has with other academic fields.

GROUP DISCUSSION – Working in groups of four, answer the questions that follow.

1. Who was Ferdinand de Saussure and why is he sometimes called ‘the father of modern linguistics’?

2. Why did Ferdinand de Saussure liken language to a game of chess?
3. Define the term oppositions *paradigmatic/sintagmatic* according to Saussure.

4. Define the term oppositions *langue/parole* according to Saussure.

5. Define the term oppositions *signified/signifier* according to Saussure.

6. Define the term oppositions *diachronic/synchronic* according to Saussure.
7. Who was Leonard Bloomfield and how did he contribute to the study of language?

8. Define descriptive linguistics and explain how the study of language changed with it.

9. Explain, using your own words, the two important aspects of language which descriptive linguistics ignore.
10. What was so radical about Chomsky's contribution to the development of linguistics?

11. How did Chomsky define creativity?

12. What does Geoffrey Finch mean by the sentence ‘Chomsky was responsible for initiating a new era in grammatical enquire (page 11)?
13. What linguist was responsible for the idea of a **universal grammar**? How does the universal grammar relate to **linguistic universals**?

14. Define **systemic grammar** and **communicative grammar**.
15. What is Geoffrey Finch's purpose in using the sentence 'Linguistics today then is a subject whose boundaries are forever widening and which presents no single face to the world' (page 14)? And how does this idea relate to David Crystal's sentence 'The field of linguistics includes both science and the humanities, and offers a breadth of coverage that, for many aspiring students of the subject, is the primary source of its appeal' (page 412)?

16. Write your reaction to the usefulness of this reading assignment. Also, comment on what you learned about modern linguistics as a result of this assessment.