

«Scientific revolutions» and paradigms in linguistics.

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

Eventually, he formed an entire system for the method by which one paradigm is replaced by a succeeding one, which he published in a book called *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. One of the main criticisms of Kuhn is that he muddled the concept of paradigm, by having it mean the scientific worldview on the one hand (which includes such basics as what sort of things the universe is made of, what the proper methods of answering questions are, even what questions are the proper ones to ask) - and on the other hand by limiting it specifically to a function more like a linguistic paradigm, of an exemplary book which sets the standards for all those things just mentioned. Examples of this second definition of paradigm include Aristotle's *Physics* and Newton's *Principia* as well as books like Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. Even Kuhn's *Structure* itself could be considered a paradigm. One of the best examples of a paradigm in its exemplary method of teaching is Marvin Harris's *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches*.

Linguistic Paradigms

Although this is all but forgotten today, the word paradigm had its origin as an obscure bit of linguist jargon. It derives from the Greek verb *deiknumi*, 'pointing out or exhibiting something', and the preposition *para*, 'side by side', which then becomes *para-deigma*, a pattern, model or example. A linguistic paradigm is the pattern of conjugation or declension that one has to memorise in order to be able to conjugate verbs or decline nouns. For instance, when studying Latin, every student learns the handy pattern:

amo
amas
amat
amamus
amatis
amant

and thus for any other Latin verb of the first conjugation the student doesn't need to memorise new forms, but can simply use the same pattern while replacing the 'am' part with the particular root for the verb in question. It sounds much more complicated than it really is, because in essence all you do is use the proven example of a pattern and apply that pattern to all other things of the same type.