

**A general characteristic of modern linguistic paradigms.  
The doctrine about paradigms of scientific knowledge and a problem of a  
linguistic historiography.**

### Paradigms and Paradigm Shifts

'Paradigm' has become one of the most overused buzzwords in the corporate world today. 'Paradigm shifts' and 'creating a new paradigm' has become the fallback solution to problems from low revenue to... lack of revenue. Still, very few people actually understand what a paradigm is, how it functions, or where the theory came from. This entry is an attempt to explain the concept of paradigm.

#### Thomas Kuhn

Thomas Kuhn was trained as a 20th-century physicist. One day, while preparing for his doctoral dissertation, he attempted to read Aristotle's *Physics*, the most influential work in the field of physics until Newton. Kuhn found that despite his extensive schooling in physics, he was completely unable to understand anything Aristotle was saying - in fact, it sounded like nonsense. Since he contended that (a) Aristotle, often considered the greatest thinker in the entire western world, was not an idiot and (b) he (Kuhn) was likewise not an idiot, nor was he an outsider to physics, there was only one possible answer: when Kuhn and Aristotle talked about physics, they didn't really mean the same thing. From this revelation, which he later likened to a gestalt shift<sup>4</sup>, Kuhn came up with a new system of understanding science and scientific change in which a new scientific theory is actually so fundamentally different from the previous one that they are not even mutually understandable (this is called incommensurability theory). He expanded this beyond just scientific theories, however, to the entire mindset of any given scientific community, which he called a paradigm.