Introduction to General Linguistics

BBI 3201 (Unit 1-8 /8)
Semua Program Bacelor

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MODUL PEMBELAJARAN : BBI3201 Introduction To General Linguistics disediakan dalam bentuk bahan pengajaran dan pembelajaran kenderi di bawah program Pendidikan Jarak Jauh, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Sebarang pertanyaan dan cadangan untuk memperbaiki gaya penyampaian dan isi kandungan modul ini boleh dikemukakan kepada penulis dengan menggunakan alamat penerbit.

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ABOUT DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education is full of challenges and opportunities. The challenge is to commit yourself to a schedule of achievement and to maintain that schedule. The opportunities are many: to increase your knowledge and application of the material so that you add value to the various processes in your life; to increase your value to your employer; and to prepare you for the continuous changes you will be facing.

Participants in this process who are committed to their studies will be able to complete the program successfully.

One of the advantages is that you are able to study at your own convenience—at home, in the office, during your leisure time, on your way to work—anywhere you can concentrate for a period of time on the material.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that the total responsibility is in your hands, as you do not have regular weekly class sessions to push you into completing the assignments.

Instructors can be contacted by telephone, e-mail, fax and correspondence for any advice or consultation you feel you need. Remember, you will only get help if you ask for it.
INTRODUCTION TO THIS STUDY GUIDE

♦ The material you read in this booklet is meant to act only as a guide to the prescribed text. The prescribed text is Fromkin, V. and Rodman, R. (1993). An Introduction to Language. New York: Harcourt Brace. The text shall be referred to as F & R throughout this study guide.

♦ This study guide is not meant to be a text in its own right. Topics or issues may be presented at some length to help provide a framework for your studying and to expand or emphasize material presented in the text.

♦ This guide provides a framework of the important points which you should use to lead you in your study. Remember, it is only a guide to point out some of the important issues. This course demands knowledge of the text and this guide.

♦ At the end of every section, there are a number of pertinent questions which you should answer as they will help out to comprehend, apply and analyze the subject material. You may check your answers with those I suggest as solutions to the questions at the end of each unit.
COURSE PREPARATION, QUESTIONS AND ASSESSMENT

PREPARATION

An essential part of your learning will be the study and preparation you do for each section of the course by reviewing any introduction to the various units in this Study Guide, and by carefully reading the assigned chapters in the text. It is strongly advised that you answer the discussion questions at the end of each chapter of the text.

Sometimes, as well, you will be asked additional questions in the Questions component of this Study Guide.

You will see from the schedule that you will have to maintain a vigorous pace of reading. The number of pages with each assignment have been noted and you should use this information to plan your progress through each section as it is critical that you stay ahead, or at least on target.

Learning should be a positive experience and to keep it as such, regular attention to your preparation and completion of the assignments is critical and rests with you.
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QUESTIONS

At the end of each topic in this Study Guide there is a “Questions” component. To fully understand the course material you should answer all the questions. Some possible answers to these questions are given at the end of each unit.

A good idea when studying and preparing to answer questions, is to read the questions before you read the material. In this way you are aware of what material needs special attention as you do your reading. It is always a good idea to read the Summary of a chapter prior to the actual reading of the chapter.

If you have difficulty in responding to the questions, review the related material in the text, and in the Study Guide.

ASSESSMENT

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<td>Assignment</td>
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Final Examination

There will be a one and a quarter hour comprehensive final examination. This will be held during the period scheduled for exams. The exam will
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consist of 40 multiple choice questions. Topics tested during the final examination will cover those we have covered throughout the semester.

Quiz

A multiple choice Quiz comprising 30-40 questions will be given during our third meeting. You will be tested on the following topics:

(i) What is linguistics
(ii) Branches of linguistics
(iii) Phonology
(iv) Morphology
(v) Syntax

Assignment

There will be one graded assignment, worth 30% of the overall evaluation. It will be given to you at our second meeting. All your assignments are to be handed in to your respective tutorial centres. You must indicate the following on the first page of your assignment.

Course Code: BBI 3201
Course Name: Introduction to General Linguistics
Instructor: Ain Nadzimah Abdullah
Your name: ________________________________
Student number: __________________________
Tutorial centre: ____________________________
A Reminder

All examinations and assignments are to be completed by the individual without collaboration with other persons. This is to be adhered to strictly.

TUTORIALS/CHECKPOINTS

There will be three scheduled meetings during the semester for orientation, review, briefing, and examination. These sessions are critical and your attendance is absolutely required.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

The reading assignments are given at the beginning of each unit in this Study Guide. Carefully review all assigned material and answer each of the study questions assigned. This exercise will be an important indicator of your comprehension and application of the material.
INTRODUCTION TO GENERAL LINGUISTICS
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Course Aims

The course is designed as a practical and accessible introduction to the various areas of linguistic description. It aims to provide clear, straightforward descriptions and discussions to the rudiments of linguistics. It introduces the student to central concepts and essential terminology of the discipline of linguistics. It covers not only how language is structured but also how it functions, both socially and culturally.

Course Objective

The main objective of the course is to enable you to effectively learn linguistics by combining explanation with application through an understanding of

a. design features of language
b. how languages work and
c. what linguists do
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ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTORS

Ain Nadzimah Abdullah

I am a lecturer in the Department of English, Faculty of Modern Language Studies at Universiti Putra Malaysia. I received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa. In 1985, I received a Masters degree in Linguistics from California State University, Fresno. Upon returning to Malaysia in 1986, I taught English to upper secondary students at Maktab Rendah Sains MARA in Kuala Terengganu and Jasin. In 1991, I joined Universiti Putra Malaysia. At Universiti Putra Malaysia, I teach General Linguistics and Academic Writing. My research interests are in the field of Sociolinguistics and Applied Linguistics.

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INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS

This course is aimed at developing a broad understanding of the human language system, that is to know what language is, its use and how it works. It is hoped that through the course students will have sharper ears for language, a clearer understanding of its nature, a livelier interest in all its manifestation and to be more critical.

The more immediate objectives of this course are:

1. To equip students with basic foundation to make them able to examine their own linguistic beliefs and attitudes.
2. To make them aware of the diversity of language systems and their fundamental similarities.
3. To introduce student to the various subfields of linguistics.
4. To provide students with the basic tools and techniques for linguistic analysis and to give them some practice in using these to arrive at organizing principles of a language.
5. To familiarise students with the basic concepts necessary to further pursue further linguistic studies.
Unit 1: INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS

Topic: LANGUAGE

Learning strategies

At the end of the unit students should be able to:

1. describe the origin of language;
2. answer the question, "What is language?";
3. define linguistics;
4. explain what it means to know a language;

HOW DID A LANGUAGE START?

For thousands of years people with interest in the study of language had carried out experiments to verify some theories that concerned the origin of language. Many theories have evolved. They are very interesting but we are in no position to accept or to discard or to dismiss these ideas. Once, Psammethichus, an Egyptian Pharaoh (664-610 B.C.) carried out an experimental research to find out what he said was the most natural language. In the experiment he had two infants raised in a remote area where they were supposed to have no human contacts except the servant who was to look after them. The servant had to obey strict instructions and one of them was not to utter even a sound the infants. This was to make the infants come up with a language which would be the natural language. As time went by the children reached the age when they could talk. It was reported that the first word that they could say was bekos, a Phrygian word for bread. Thus, it was thought that Phrygian was the original language. By the way, Phrygian is now extinct.

Frederick II, who was a Holy Roman Emperor conducted the same experiment, but it was a failure since the two infants died before they could even talk. About two hundred years later king James IV of carried out the same experiment. In contrast to Psammethichus findings, the infants for the experiment spoke Hebrew. This triggered the thought that Hebrew was the first language.

There were suggestions that the languages of the world started with one language but then because of the movement of people the speakers of the language became geographically separated. Hence their languages became diversified and gradually became different because of lesser or no contacts with the rest of the group. However, a contrasting theory was also projected.
According to one Mexican historian, when the population of people became large at one particular location, their languages were confused. To avoid the confusions they wander to other parts of the earth. Historical studies of languages do indicate that languages originated from one language and the breakways do exhibit some similarities with each other. In other words, they still have something in common.

In the middle of the eighteenth century Jean Jacques Rousseau theorised that language started through the show of feelings, such as anger, fear, surprise and pleasure. Gestures which were earlier used proved to be not good enough for communication, as a result words were coined. Initially, words were meant to name things and sentences constructed consisted of only one word. From this basic structure man expanded his verbal communication by inventing more terms to make transfer of message more efficient.

Two centuries later Sir Richard Paget argued that;

"Human speech arose out of a generalized unconscious pantomimic gesture language - made by the limbs and features as a whole including the tongue and lips) - which became specialized in gestures of the organs of articulation, owing to the human hand (and eyes) becoming continuously occupied with use of tools. The gestures of the organs of articulation were recognised by the 'hearer because the unconsciously reproduced in his mind the actual gesture which had produced this sound."

Paget's controversial theory put scholars into division. To some it was difficult to accept how the speech mechanism could be used as pantomimic gestures while some agreed on a motor theory of speech perception. Gordon Hewer pointed out that gestures could be used to replace speech as in hand signals for the 'deaf' and wherever the use of verbal communication is not possible due to interferences and distortions.

A.R. Luria claimed that speech is the product of "abbreviated motions which represented work activities and pointing gestures by which men communicated with one another". Speech developed later when 'the disassociation of sound and gesture was accomplished'.

Otto Jesperson came up with an interesting view of the origin of language. He suggested that language started with song that man used to express his love especially rather than to communicate. These theories support the motion that man invented language. Presently scholars are more interested with the development of language and how it is related to the evolutionary development of the human species. Language is a growing phenomenon
and it changes every day. A language grows with its speakers. As long as man is set to have better tomorrows, the development of language and changes that are involved will not come to end.

WHAT IS LANGUAGE?

Language is the greatest human possession. It is the focal point of everything we do and it distinguishes man from other forms of life on earth. We need language to function. While being the principal medium for communication, it is also the bond that links people together and binds them to their culture. Without language our needs and wishes will never get the chance to be expressed. Without language we would have to be doing a lot of actions rather than tell. And through writing and verbal communication we are able to be in contact with places and people that we have never seen. However, we cannot take language for granted as we do for breathing or sleeping because it is extremely complex and has unique characteristics.

The characteristics of language

Language is productive. A speaker of a language is able to come up with an indefinite number of sentences never before known to anyone, yet perfectly understandable to their hearers and readers. In other words, language can meet our expressive needs virtually without any limit.

Every language has arbitrarily attached vocal symbols to the ideas and objects that are a part of the culture it serves. The word table in Bahasa Melayu is meja and tawalet in Arabic. These languages have their own specific term to refer to the same thing. But, no language can claim that it has the perfect term to name that piece of furniture. Names or words for things do not necessarily have any connection with the thing itself. Similarly, the sounds of a language are arbitrary. English uses 36 speech sounds and other languages do not necessarily have to use the same number. There are sounds that are present in English, but are not in use in other languages and vice versa. For example, the sound /v/ as in van is not present in Tamil.

The complexity of language is extremely enormous, yet every language is systematic. It is systematic on many levels, but from a basic observation, we know that each language contains two systems; a system of sounds and a system of meanings. There are many speech sounds used by all languages combined, but, only certain sounds (36 in English - as mentioned above) are used by any particular language and only certain combinations of these sounds are possible. For example, in English one can say I chopped the tree but not, I chopped the eet, and Chopped the Otree I. The sound system of a language systematically has provision for a small number of sounds to be repeatedly used in various combinations to form meaning. The system of meaning permits the units of meaning to be arranged in an infinite number of ways to express simple and complex ideas.
The feature of duality, one of sounds and the other of meanings, is definitely unique in human communication. The sound or symbols /w n/ has a dual quality as a sound or as a concept because it can represent one or won. Only through context can one differentiate the meanings attached to these homophones.

WHAT IS LINGUISTICS?

The interest in the study of language is on-going. Throughout time scholars have made studies to solve the mysteries of language, but till the present day much of these mysteries prevail. Linguists are still at work investigating and discussing the mysteries and problems that are perceived. And they are doing it scientifically. When we say that linguists aim to be scientific in their investigation, we mean that they try to study language in much the way as a scientist studies physics or chemistry. Since empirical methods of the sciences are applied as much as possible in order to bring the precision and control of scientific investigation to the study of language, linguistics has been defined as the scientific study of language. Among other things the study involves the observation of language use, forming hypotheses about it, testing and refining them based on the evidence collected.

Linguistics is descriptive, not Prescriptive

To say that linguistics is a descriptive (i.e. non-normative) science is say that linguists try to study, discover and record the rules to which the members of a language-community actually conform and does not seek to impose upon them other (i.e. extraneous) rules, or norm of correctness. People connect the idea of rules in a language with those they learned in grammar. These rules were taught by teachers and traditional grammarians. They say:

Use "shall" when using the first person (I or we);

Use "will" with second or third person (you, he,she, it and they)

RIGHT: I shall write a story tomorrow.
WRONG: I will write a story tomorrow.

Never split an infinitive.

RIGHT: To improve your English further, you have to read frequently.
WRONG: To further improve your English, you have to frequently read.
Never end a sentence with a preposition.

RIGHT: At what time did he arrive?

WRONG: What time did he arrive at?

These are prescriptive rules prescribed by the prescriptivists so that there is a standard usage of the language. These rules shape the spoken and written English to some standard norm. Linguists do not favor these rules. They are more interested in the unconscious rules we apply when we speak. Regardless of what dialect or style or variety of language we use, we do follow certain rules. These rules were never taught to native speakers of language and they are not the same as the ones prescribed by the prescriptivists. These rules vary according to dialects, variety of the language and location of the speech-community.

However, according to Lyons (1986):

"There are no absolute standards of correctness in language. We can say that a foreigner has made a mistake, if he says something that violates the rules immanent in usage of native speakers. We can also say, if we wish, that a speaker of a non-standard social or regional dialect of English has spoken ungrammatically if his utterance violates the rules immanent in Standard English. But, in saying this, we are of course assuming that he was intending, or perhaps ought to be intending, to use Standard English. And that is itself an assumption which requires justification."

The rules which do not really show the actual language use are in existence because, firstly, they provide a standard of English that is accepted by most speakers. Complying to the prescriptive rules makes the speaker easily understood by the listeners.

Speech and Writing

There is a very wide misconception between speech and writing. Some people described writing to be more perfect, more correct and more stable, whereas speech is sloppy, corrupted and easily susceptible to change. We tend to agree to this idea since a piece of writing is usually a well-prepared text. In the course of preparing it we are very particular with correct use of the language, words and terms and the flow of content is consistent, whereas in speech, since it is almost spontaneous, one tends to commit repetition unnecessarily, to be grammatically unstable, to code-mix and code-switch.
and to be doubtful of what to say, thus hesitates, bringing in the sloppy
effect. This group of people opposed the idea of speech being primary and
writing is secondary. Their justification is that writing is more aptly worded
and better organized. In addition, they argue that writing is associated with
education and indirectly connected to the correct standard of language.
Furthermore, writing can be preserved for a long time. However, speech is
the most immediate manifestation of language, while writing simply
represents speech. All types of writing have speech as their base.
Moreover, scholars of language use spoken language as their data and their
object of description, except for languages that are already extinct. In
addition, spoken language encodes thoughts into speech sounds, while
writing encodes spoken language into graphic forms. Furthermore, writing is
a new invention that is based on speech. Anthropologists claim that man
began to speak as early as hundreds of thousands years ago, while writing was
believed to have started in Sumeria some 6000 years ago. It was believed
that writing was then used to keep record of livestock and merchandise.
Presently, there are more illiterates than literates since writing does not exist
everywhere. As a matter of fact, there are languages that do not have any
kind of written form, e.g. the language of the remote people in New Guinea.
However, we cannot term that their language as primitive because every
language is complete for the community that uses it. Speech is where there
are people and as long as the language can serve the needs of its speakers, the
language is good enough for them.

Writing needs to be learnt, in contrast, speech is acquired automatically.
Every child learns to speak the language of the community in which he is
brought up. He acquires his native language long before he attends school.
Writing systems vary in complexity, but regardless of their level of
sophistication, they all must be taught. Thus, speech is primary and writing
is secondary.

ANIMAL COMMUNICATION

Human language is said to be species specific and species uniform
(Lernenberg, 1967) because it is unique to humans and similar in all
humans. This fact is highlighted when animal language is compared. To a
certain extent animals do communicate with one another or with humans. It
is not rare to come across domestic animals calling for their cubs and litters
when the last wander away. In homes where pet animals are kept, it is
normal to see these animals negotiate for food, love and attention with
their masters. However, the scope of the messages are limited and related to
here-and-now.

Communication among bees

The bees have been proven to indulge in an elaborate system of
communication by Karl Von Frisch, an ethologist. He started his studies of
communication among bees in 1920. His findings made him a winner of a
Nobel Prize in 1970. According to Von Frisch, in many senses the communication system of the bee is referential, it tells the other bees about something outside the hive. A bee that finds nectar will return to the hive and inform the others about the direction and the distance between the hive and the location of the food. This is done by dancing in front of the community in the hive. The others will immediately participate in the dance and then altogether leave the hive to gather the nectar. Although the movements of the dance have structure and meaning, the message is just to tell the others the location of the nectar. The repertoire is limited in nature, since it does not describe the flower concerned or the journey to the location.

Sea mammals and birds

Many animals have specific ways of communicating with their own kinds. Whales and dolphins convey messages by using systematic whistles and grunts that are understood by other whales and dolphins (Herman, 1981). Konrad Lorenz (1971) made a study on birds and discovered that some birds have a variety of meaningful calls. The jackdaws, for example, have calls for counting, for flying away, and one for flying home. They also make rattling sounds before attacking any other creature carrying a dangling black object.

The communication systems utilized by these animals are purposeful for them and they resemble human language. However, they are restricted to here-and-now and to a set of messages. Human language is unique and true language. Human language is productive in the sense that a speaker of a particular language can construct many sentences to say things that are never heard before. In addition, human language has semanticity since it can represent ideas, events and objects symbolically. Moreover, it also has displacement, meaning that the messages need not be tied to the immediate situation only.

Exercise

1. How do bees communicate?
2. How is linguistics scientific?
3. What do you understand by prescriptive grammar?
4. What is linguistic competence?

1. Bees communicate by dancing on the wall of the hive to make it known to the other bees the location and quality of food they have discovered.
2. **Linguistics** is the scientific study of language. Language is so valuable to the individual, so critical to the efficient functioning of human societies, and in itself so impressively intricate and profound in nature, that it bound to attract a great amount of intellectual attention. This attention produce studies which have practical importance, like in speech therapy and techniques of translation. Linguistics is in fact a considerable cluster of disciplines, scientific disciplines.

3. There are grammarians who insist that there are certain forms which are "correct" that all educated people should apply. These grammarians support the prescription of grammatical rules rather than describe them. For example, they term it as erroneous to use double negative like I ain't got no money.

4. When one is linguistically competent, it means that when one knows a language one knows the system that relates sound with meanings.
Unit 2: PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

Learning Objectives
At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. define phonetics and phonology
2. explain the physiological mechanisms of speech production
3. explain the universal system of transcribing speech sounds and
4. illustrate concepts e.g. vowels, consonants

Required Reading

Outline of Unit
- Phonetics
- Phonetic transcription - International Phonetic Alphabet
- Organs of speech
- Sound classes
- Articulation
- Phonology
- Phonotactics

*Note: The material you read in this unit is meant to act as a GUIDE to the readings required from the prescribed text
We are capable of producing an infinite number of sounds but no language uses more than a small proportion of this infinite set and no two human languages make use of exactly the same set of sounds. When we speak, there is movement of the tongue, velum (soft palate), lips and the lungs. In this unit we are going to study the types of sound which result from using the different organs, the branch of linguistics which is concerned with the description of the patterns of sounds in a language, and the way the set of sounds in a particular language works as a system.

Phonetics and Phonology

Phonetics

It is important to note that phonetics is not a new or recent subject. In fact, it is centuries old.

Phonetics is the branch of linguistics which examines the inventory and structure of the sounds of language. There are two ways of approaching phonetics. One way studies the physiological mechanism of speech production and is known as articulatory phonetics. The other, known as acoustic phonetics, deals with the physics of speech sounds. It examines the physical properties of speech sounds as they are determined and measured by machines, and attempts to deduce the acoustic basis of speech production and perception.

Consider the definition of phonetics on page 176 of F & R. I hope that with this definition phonetics and what a phonetician does is clear to you.

You will realize that phoneticians actually grapple with the task of describing and analyzing sounds. Have you seen the musical ‘My Fair Lady’? It is based on George Bernard Shaw’s play Pygmalion. In the musical, one of the main characters, Professor Henry Higgins, is a phonetician. Using a special set of symbols, he records in detail, what a speaker says so he can reproduce it accurately.
Phonetic Transcription

• **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)**

Since the sixteenth century efforts have been made to devise a universal system of transcribing the sounds of speech. Linguists abandon conventional spelling for the purpose of representing spoken utterances, and use one of the many specially devised systems of notation in which one symbol represents one sound. The best known system is probably the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The goal of this system of transcription is to represent each sound of human speech with a single symbol. In this alphabet, the relationship between sound and symbol is one-to-one. These symbols are enclosed in brackets [ ] to indicate that the transcription is phonetic and does not represent the spelling system of a particular language.

*Please remember that the English spelling system aims to represent (in writing) the sounds used by speakers of English when they speak the language. However, in actual fact, the relationship between English spelling and sounds is not one-to-one. It is important to note that each spelling symbol does not necessarily correspond to a single sound. You may understand this better when you think of words which have fewer sounds than letters e.g. fill, butler, phone. There are also cases where a word could consist of more sounds than spelling symbols e.g. Cuba.*

• **IPA Symbols**

a. A number of IPA symbols are borrowed from the conventional written alphabet:

\[ b \] as in 'bird'
\[ d \] as in 'dog'

(*Remember: Symbols representing sounds are put into square brackets*)

b. Other symbols are variations of alphabet letters:

\[ o \] as in 'hot' is an upside down \( a \)
\[ \eta \] as in 'bang' is a combination of \( n \) and \( g \)
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Phonetics and Phonology

[ 1 ] as in ‘hit’ is a small-size capital I

c. 
Sometimes obsolete letters are used:

[ʃ] as in ‘dish’

d. 
Other symbols are from the Greek alphabet:

[θ] as in ‘thin’

e. 
A few symbols are inventions:

[ᵽ] Welsh _ll as in ‘Llanelli’

f. 
Sometimes supplementary marks (known as ‘diacritics’) are added to the symbols. For example, two dots (ː) indicate length.

[uː] (long u) as in ‘boot’

The use of a standardized international phonetic alphabet enables linguists to transcribe language consistently and accurately. In theory, the IPA has built up a store of symbols which can represent any sound in any language.

Transcription can be a tricky process as depicted in the cartoon on pp. 180 of F & R.

Can you find the silent letter in each of the following words? (i) sword (ii) knight (iii) doubt (iv) psychology

[Answers: (i) w (ii) k (iii) b (iv) p]

This enables us to say that the spelling of a word may contain ‘silent’ letters and these letters have no sound associated with them. Do you think it is possible for the pronunciation of a word to include a sound which is not represented in the spelling? The answer is YES.
The Organs of Speech

- **Main organs of speech**

The figure on page 188 of F & R shows the main organs of speech: the jaw, the lips, the teeth, the teeth ridge (usually called the alveolar ridge), the tongue, the hard palate, the soft palate (the velum), the uvula, the pharynx, the larynx and the vocal chords.

*You need to understand the nature of sounds and how they are produced. To understand how we produce speech sounds, it is necessary to identify the organs involved in the articulation of these sounds. Please read pages 186-203 of F & R very carefully.*

The mobile organs are the lower jaw, lips, tongue, velum, uvula, pharynx and the vocal cords and, although it is possible to learn to move each of these at will, we have most control over the jaw, lips and tongue.

- **Tongue**

The tongue is important in the production of speech sounds and can be divided into four main areas.

They are the tip, blade (or lamina), the front and the back.

*A discussion on tongue positions in the production of vowels is discussed on page 200 of F & R.*

- **Making sounds**

Sounds could not occur without air. The air required for most sounds comes from the lungs and is thus egressive (‘going out’). Certain sounds in language can however, be made with air sucked in through the mouth. Such sounds are called ingressive (‘going in’). The sound of disgust in English, a click often written ‘Tch! Tch!’ is made on an ingressive air stream. Coming from the lungs, the air stream passes through the larynx, which is popularly referred to as the ‘Adam’s apple’.
• Vocal cords
Inside the larynx are the two folds of ligament and tissue which make up the vocal cords.

Before you read further, it would be wise for you to read p. 186-203 of F & R again and fully understand the material. In order for you to understand the reading, attempt to find answers to these questions. (Consider examples given on pp. 208-209 of F & R)

i. What is a natural class?

ii. Describe the similarities and differences in the sounds represented by the underlined elements in the following sets. (Remember you are dealing with sounds and not letters)

(a) leaf leaves
(b) sad sat
(c) feel full
(d) sing sin

Answers
i. A natural class is a group of sounds such as nasals, vowels, liquids, fricative consonants, or stop, whose members share one or more phonetic characteristics.

ii. (a) f is a voiceless labiodental fricative, v is a voiced labiodental fricative.
(b) d is a voiced alveolar plosive and t is a voiceless alveolar plosive
(c) e represents /ɛ/ which is a front closed unrounded vowel, a represents /a/ which is a back half-open rounded vowel.
(d) ng represents /ŋ/ which is a velar nasal, n represents /n/ which is an alveolar nasal
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Phonetics and Phonology

The place of articulation describes where in the mouth the airstream is interfered with. This is regardless of whether the interference is a complete blockage or a partial constriction.

• Manner of articulation

The lips, tongue, velum and glottis can be positioned in different ways to produce different sound types. These various configurations are called manners of articulation.

You must know place and manners of articulation as these are important dimensions of classifying consonant sounds.


Phonology

Phonology is the study of the sound system of language -- the rules which govern pronunciation. The word *phonology* itself comes from the Greek word *phone* which means 'voice'. The phonology of a language is the system and patterns of human language. According to the Collins Cobuild dictionary, phonology is the study of speech sounds in a particular language. If phonetics is concerned with the physical properties of speech sounds, then phonology is concerned with the way these sounds are functionally organized and distributed in a particular language. In general, the study of phonology attempts to discover general principles that underlie the patterning of sounds in human language.

Consider the definition of phonology given by a high-school student on pp. 216 of F & R. Do you agree with the definition?

Phonotactics: Segments in sequence

Native speakers of any language intuitively know that certain words that come from other languages sound unusual. They often adjust the segment sequences of
these words to conform with the pronunciation requirements of their own language. These speaker intuitions are based on a tacit knowledge of the permissible segment sequences of the speaker’s own language.

For example, English speaking students learning Russian have difficulty pronouncing a word like vprog [f p r v k], since the sequence [f p r] is never found at the beginning of words in English. Since speakers would normally adjust an impermissible sequence by altering it to a permissible one, many English speakers would pronounce the Russian word [f p r v k] as [f ð pr v k] in order to break up the impermissible sequence fpr at the beginning of the word. Phonotactics, the set of constraints on how sequences of segments pattern, forms part of a speaker’s knowledge of the phonology of his or her language.

Segments in contrast

All speakers know which segments of their language contrast. Segments are said to contrast (or to be distinctive or be in opposition) when their presence alone may distinguish forms with different meanings from each other. The segments [s] and [z] contrast in the words sip and zip, as do the vowels of hit, hate and hot.

- Minimal pairs and sets

The basic test for a sound’s distinctiveness is called a minimal pair test. A minimal pair consists of two forms with distinct meanings that differ by only one segment found in the same position in each form. The examples [slp] sip and [zl p] zip given previously form a minimal pair and show that the sounds [s] and [z] contrast in English.

I strongly recommend you to read and understand pp. 217-232 of the text before you read the following sections.

Phonetically conditioned variation:
phonemes and allophones

Everyday speech contains phonetic variation. Some of it is due to a variation in articulation which arises from extralinguistic factors such as orthodontic work,
fatigue and excitement. Such variation is not the domain of phonology. Much phonetic variation however, is systematic. It occurs most often among phonetically similar segments and is conditioned by the phonetic context or environment in which the segments are found. This means that sounds may be altered by the phonetic characteristics of neighboring sounds.

Remember that sounds which are in complementary distribution are allophones of phonemes.

- Complementary distribution

When first learning phonetic transcription, English speakers are often surprised that all the l's they pronounce are not identical. In the table below, the l's in column A are voiced and those in column B are voiceless (indicated by the subscript ʰ).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voiced and voiceless l in English</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blue [bluː]</td>
<td>plow [plɔː]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gleam [glɪm]</td>
<td>clap [klæp]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slip [slɪp]</td>
<td>clear [klɪr]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flog [flɒɡ]</td>
<td>play [plɛɪ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leaf [lɪf]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most speakers of English are unaware they produce this difference in articulation. The voicelessness of the l's in column B is an automatic consequence of their phonetic environment. These consonants vary systematically in that all of the voiceless ones occur after the class of voiceless stops. Since no voiced [l] ever occurs in the same phonetic environment as a voiceless one (and vice versa), we say that the two variants of l are in complementary distribution.

- Phonemes

A phoneme is the smallest segment of sound which can distinguish two words. It is not one specific sound. For example, consider the words below.

pin  spin  nip
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If we were to say the above words aloud, the 'p' in pin is pronounced with a lot of breath, the 'p' in spin has qualities of the 'b' in bin and the 'p' in nip is pronounced as of it were followed by a short vowel. All these 'p' sounds are different and no two people ever pronounce 'p' in exactly the same way. However, the differences are not sufficiently great to be used to distinguish meanings in English. We are therefore able to say that all the 'p' sounds in English belong to the same phoneme.

We may test whether the difference between the sounds is phonologically important by substituting one sound for another in a word. If the substitution produces a different word then we have identified a phoneme. e.g. replace [t] in tip with [d]. You then get dip, which is different from 'tip. Therefore, /t/ and /d/ are separate phonemes.

On the other hand, consider the words below.

pin    pen

These words differ in their vowel sounds and they refer to distinct objects. Since these vowels can be used to distinguish many words, e.g.

din    den  
kin    ken
tin    ten

we can say that the vowels /i/ and /e/ are different phonemes.


Phonemes and allophones

The ability to group phonetically different sounds together into one class is shared by all speakers of all languages. This phonological knowledge is expressed formally as a level of phonological (as opposed to phonetic) representation called the phonemic level. Predictable phonetic variants that are phonetically similar and in complementary distribution are called allophones. These are grouped together into a phonological unit called a phoneme.
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Phonetics and Phonology

A representation of this relationship can be seen in the diagram below.

\[ /l/ \]

[1] [1]

After voiceless stops Elsewhere

The phoneme /l/ and its allophones in English

The phonemic symbol for the class -- generally the same symbol as the elsewhere variant -- is placed between slashes, and the symbols for allophones are framed by phonetic brackets. Every speech sound we utter is an allophone of some phoneme and can be grouped together with other, usually phonetically similar sounds, into a class that is represented by a phoneme on a phonological level of representation. Phonological analysis is largely concerned with discovering the phonemes of languages and accounting for allophonic variation.

In this unit, we have examined some of the basics of sound production and how the study of phonology focuses on how sounds operate as a system. We are able to notice that regulated sounds are the building blocks of language. You must also remember that not all sounds that human beings can utter are linguistic sounds and most important of all is that not all languages use the same sounds but every language is built from a pattern of specific sounds. It is said that nobody ever learns his/her native language by beginning with complete sentences or even with words: we begin - and therefore language itself begins - with the sounds that form the words.

Further Reading

The following are some references which you may want to refer to.

(i) Introductory reading on phonetics can be found in
(ii) Specialized discussions can be found in
Questions

Attempt to answer all questions below to check whether you have understood your prescribed reading and notes provided in this study guide.

1. Supply pairs of English words which can be distinguished by the following sets of consonants. (For example, a minimal pair for /p/ and /b/ could be 'pear' and 'bear'. Remember that you are dealing with sounds and not spellings, so 'post' and 'boast' would also be a minimal pair).
   a. /p/ and /b/
   b. /t/ and /d/
   c. /k/ and /g/
   d. /s/ and /z/
   e. /m/ and /p/

2. Give the correct technical terms for the sounds made in the following ways:
   a. both lips coming together
   b. the bottom lip and the top teeth coming together
   c. the tongue touching the hard palate
   d. the tongue touching the upper teeth ridge

3. Provide the symbol for each of the following sounds and give an example of its use in an English word.
   a. voiceless velar stop
   b. voiceless labiodental fricative
   c. voiced alveolar affricate
   d. bilabial nasal
   e. high back rounded vowel
   f. high front unrounded vowel
4. Each of the following sets contains an inappropriate member. Pick it out and say why it is inappropriate.
   a. b, p, n, t
   b. b, d, z, r, s
   c. l, f, v, s, z
   d. t, d, p, f, s

5. Transcribe the following words phonemically.
   a. ghost
   b. among
   c. splendid
   d. judging

6. What is the test used for determining phonemes in a language?

7. How does an allophone differ from a phoneme?
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Phonetics and Phonology

Answers

1. a. pig, big
   b. time, dime
   c. carne, game
   d. sip, zip
   c. man, pan

2. a. bilabial
   b. labiodental
   c. palatal
   d. alveolar

3. a. k call
   b. f fat
   c. z zoo
   d. m mat
   e. u room
   f. i see

4. a. n all others are plosives
   b. s all the others are voiced
   c. l all the others are fricatives
   d. d all others are voiceless

5. a. /govst/
   b. /əmŋ/ /spləndɪd/
   c. /ðɪŋ/ /spləndɪd/

6. If we substitute one sound for another in a word and we get a change of meaning, then the two sounds must be phonemes.

7. Substituting phonemes changes meaning and sound; substituting allophones only changes sound.

*Always remember to discuss sections you are unclear about with your tutor.*
Unit 3: MORPHOLOGY

Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. state some background concepts about words
2. define morphemes and complex words
3. explain the formation of words
4. distinguish between content words and function words
5. distinguish inflectional and derivational words.

Required Reading


Outline of Unit

What is morphology?

Morphemes and complex words

Words and parts of speech

Content words and function words

Inflectional and derivational words

Word formation

*Note: The material you read in this module is meant to act as a guide to the readings required from the prescribed text.

What is Morphology?

Morphology is the study of words, how they are structured and how they are put together from smaller parts. Morphology provides rules called morphological rules that are used to form all the words of a language, including possible but nonoccurring words. Morphology describes the morphological competence of the native speaker. For example the native speaker is able to recognize words as being well-formed or otherwise and is also able to come up with new words that are created based on existing patterns.
What do we know when we know a word?

When we know a word it means that we know various kinds of information about that particular word. The kinds of information can be categorized as:

1. **Phonological Information**

For every word we know, we have learnt how to pronounce it. One of the things that we have learnt about the word boy is that we know what are the sounds involved and the certain sequence of them that become boy.

2. **Morphological Information**

For every word that we have learnt, we intuitively know something about its internal structure. For example, our intuitions tell us that the word boy cannot be broken down into any meaningful parts. However, the word boys seems to be made up of two parts: the word boy and an additional element s (which pluralizes the word).

3. **Syntactic Information**

For every word that we have learnt, we learn how it fits into the overall structure of sentences in which it can be used. For example, we know that the word manages can be used like Ahmad manages the project, and the word manageable can be used like The project is manageable. It may not be to our knowledge that manages is a verb or that manageable is an adjective. But we intuitively know how to use those words in different kinds of sentences.

4. **Semantic Information**

Every word we know, we have learnt at least a certain meaning of it. For example, for the word gap, we know that it means a certain opening or hole. In contrast, we may not know certain extended meaning of the word as in Ahmad is a joyous person and he has the gift of the gap.

5. **Pragmatic Information**

For every word we learn, we not only know its meaning or meanings, but we also know how to use it in the context of discourse or conversation. For example the word brother can be used not only to refer to a male sibling but also as a conversational exclamation, as in Oh, brother! What a sight! In some cases, words seem to have a use but no meaning as such. For example the word hello is used to greet, but seems to have no meaning beyond that particular used.
Words and their uses change over time. For example, the word *deer* at one time in history was the general word for *animal* but now it is used to refer to only one particular *animal*.

**Morphemes and Complex Words**

Words consist of morphemes which are the smallest meaningful or significant units of grammar. For example:

(a)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>boy</th>
<th>boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>table</td>
<td>tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>car</td>
<td>cars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above examples plurality is indicated by adding *-s* as in:

boy + *s*

In each of the examples there are two morphemes. The morpheme *boy* (or *table* or *car*) and the morpheme *s* which in many English words marks the difference between singular and plural. Now look at the following examples:

(b)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>walk</td>
<td>walked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk</td>
<td>talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>block</td>
<td>blocked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above examples the morpheme *ed* indicates the past tense for many English verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>walk</td>
<td>walk + <em>ed</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk</td>
<td>talk + <em>ed</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>block</td>
<td>block + <em>ed</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Free Morphemes and Bound Morphemes**

Morphemes are categorized into two classes, free and bound morphemes. A free morpheme can stand alone independently as a word. The words *boy* and *walk* can stand alone without having to be attached to other morphemes. In contrast, the morphemes *-s* and *-ed* have to be attached to other morphemes before they can function as part of a word. Thus, *-s* and *-ed* are known as bound morphemes. Bound morphemes are known as affixes (reflecting the fact that they must be attached or affixed to other morphemes).
Affixes are referred to as prefixes when they attached to the beginning of another morpheme like the prefix -re in rewrite, and suffixes when they are attached to the end of another morpheme like the suffix -ize in modernize. Certain languages also have affixes known as infixes which are attached within another morpheme like the word kayu, meaning wood in Tagalog, which can be inserted the infix -in immediately after the consonant "k" to form the word kinayu to mean gathered wood.

![Diagram of morphemes]

**Figure 1**

**Inflectional and Derivational Morphology**

Inflectional morphemes changes the form of a word in order to express its relationship to other words in the sentence.

- cat + s > cats
- play + ed > played
- drink + ing > drinking

In the above examples the morphemes -s, -ed and -ing are inflectional morphemes.

Derivational morphemes changes existing word into a new word.

- kind + ness > kindness
- boy + hood > boyhood
- danger + ous > dangerous

In the above examples -ness, -hood and -ous are derivational morphemes.
Morphs and Allomorphs

Sometimes a morpheme has only one morph, or phonological form:

\[
\text{loud} + \text{ly} \rightarrow \text{loudly}.
\]

But frequently a morpheme has a number of variants known as allomorphs. Allomorphs are not always easy to classify. Totally dissimilar forms may be allomorphs of the same morpheme. Cats, dogs, horses, sheep, oxen, geese all contain the English plural morpheme. An allomorph is said to be phonologically conditioned when its form is dependent on the adjacent phonemes. It is morphologically conditioned when there is no phonological conditioning factor.

Phonological Conditioning

The English plural morpheme provides excellent examples of both phonologically and morphologically conditioned allomorphs. The most frequent allomorph is \(-s\) (as in dogs). For this reason, the plural morpheme is often referred to as \(-z\).

\(-s\) / \(-z\) / \(-iz\) are all phonologically conditioned allomorphs of the English plural morpheme:

\(-z\) occurs after most voiced phonemes, as in dogs, lambs, bees.

\(-s\) occurs after most voiceless phonemes as in cats, bunks, graphs.

\(-iz\) occurs mainly after sibilants, as in horses, cheeses, dishes.

Morphological Conditioning

Words such as oxen, sheep and geese are irregular plurals and the pose quiet a problem. Although they function as plurals in the same way as cats, dogs, and horses, they are not marked as plurals in the same way. Such morphologically conditioned plurals are more difficult to identify and analyse.

Content Words (Open Classes) and Function Words (Closed Classes)

Content words are said to have meaning as independent words. Examples of content words are chair, sit, tall, quickly and many more nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Function words cannot be easily defined as isolated words, but rather serve to indicate some grammatical function in a phrase or sentence. Examples are words like and, or (conjunctions), a, the (articles), this, that (demonstratives), to, from (prepositions). Closely related to the terms Content Words and Function Words. The open class words are those
belonging to the major part-of-speech classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) which in any language tend to be quite large and open-ended. That is, many new words can be created and added to these classes in relatively short periods of time. In contrast, the closed-class words are those belonging to grammatical, or function classes (such as articles, demonstratives, conjunctions and prepositions), which in any language tend to be small and closed.

**Word Formation**

Words are formed in many ways. Basically, they are formed by putting morphemes together. However, there are other ways involved, too. The following are the most common word formation processes.

**Compounding**

A compound word is formed by the combination of two independent words. The parts of a compound can be free morphemes, derived words or other compounds, in nearly any combination.

- girl + friend -------- girlfriend
- life + guard -------- lifeguard
- play + ground -------- playground
- under + go -------- undergo

**Affixation**

Most of the morphological work in English is performed by affixes - that is, bound morphemes that are added to free morphemes. Affixes, as mentioned earlier are *Prefixes, Suffixes and Infixes*.

- play + er -------- player
- un + do -------- undo

**Reduplication**

In reduplication either all of a morpheme is doubled (total reduplication) or part of it is (partial reduplication). In English, total reduplication occurs only sporadically and it usually indicates intensity:

That is a big big fish.

In Bahasa Melayu reduplication is used to show plural:

- batu (stone) -------- batu batu

33
Tagalog uses partial reduplication to show future:

  bili (buy) ------ bibili (will buy)

Acronyms

These words are formed by taking the initial sounds (or letters) of a phrase and uniting them into a combination which is pronounceable as a separate word. For example:

  radio detection and ranging ------ radar
  light amplification through the stimulated emission of radiation ------ laser

Blending

A blending is a combination of the parts of two words, usually the beginning of one word and the end of another:

  smoke + fog ------ smog
  breakfast + lunch ------ brunch

Clipping

Clipping involves the shortening of words without paying attention to the derivational morphology of the word or related words:

  examination ------ exam
  dormitory ------ dorm

Coinage

Words may be created without using any of the methods above and without employing any other word or word parts already in existence:

  Xerox          kodak     kleenex

Exercise

1. Pick out the bound morphemes in the following words and say whether they are derivational morphemes or inflectional morphemes.

   1. walker  
   2. chaired  
   3. tailings

       6. housing
       7. commissioners
       8. reviewed
4. children
5. travelled

9. dangerously
10. bestowed

2. With relevant examples compare and contrast between open and closed word classes.

3. Segment the following words into free and bound morphemes. Say in each case whether the bound morpheme changes the word class of the free morpheme:

1. unseperable
2. dislike
3. integration
4. terrifier
5. breaths
6. communicatively
7. prehistoric
8. similarities
9. gentlemanly
10. maritimers

4. We noted that radar and laser are acronyms. List as many recent English words as possible that are acronyms, and state their origin.

**Answer Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Bound Morpheme</th>
<th>Der/Inf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>walker</td>
<td>er</td>
<td>der</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chaired</td>
<td>ed</td>
<td>inf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailings</td>
<td>ing/s</td>
<td>inf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>ren</td>
<td>inf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>travelled</td>
<td>ed</td>
<td>inf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housing</td>
<td>ing</td>
<td>inf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commissioners</td>
<td>er/s</td>
<td>der</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reviewed</td>
<td>ed</td>
<td>inf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dangerously</td>
<td>ous/ly</td>
<td>der</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bestowed</td>
<td>ed</td>
<td>inf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Open Class Words**

noun, verbs adj., etc

New words can be added to this class

**Closed Class Words**

conjunctions, articles, etc.

No new words can be added to this class
3.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>un/sepera/able</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>dislike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>terrifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>breaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>communicative/ly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>prehistoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>similarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>gentle/man/ly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>maritimers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. NASA, UNICEF, MIA, NATO, INTERNET, E-MAIL, etc
Unit 4: SYNTAX

Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. state basic sentence type;
2. construct tree diagrams;
3. explain and illustrate embedded sentences;
4. distinguish between surface and deep structures.

Required Reading


Outline of Unit

What is syntax?
Phrase structure trees
Recursion

*Note: The material you read in this module is meant to act as a GUIDE to the readings required from the prescribed text.

What is syntax?

Syntax is a Greek word which means arrangement. Syntax is a subfield of Linguistics which concerns the study of the ways in which words are arranged to make larger units (sentences). Thus, a syntactic analysis is concerned with sentences and their constituents of sentences. A constituent refers to a component part of a sentence. For this reason, syntactic analysis of a sentence is sometimes referred to as constituent analysis.

Sentences are supposed to be strings of word that are composed together. But they are not strung randomly. For example, Tree road the the near chopped was down yesterday is unstructured, ungrammatical and meaningless. The tree near the road was chopped down yesterday is structured, grammatical and meaningful. Thus, a sentence is structured, grammatical and most of all meaningful.
Linguists are interested in two aspects of this structuring. They are interested in the patterns underlying the sentence and its constituents and they are also interested in the syntactic devices used to link the constituents together, and the ways in which the various parts are related to one another.

The Concept of Structure

In all languages, sentences are structured in certain specific ways. What is syntactic structure, and what does it mean to say that sentences are structured? It is difficult to answer this in any direct fashion. In fact, it is impossible to answer the question What is structure? without actually constructing a theory of syntax, and indeed one of the central concerns of current theories of syntax is to provide an answer to this question. Thus, it must be stressed that we cannot define the concept of structure before we study syntax; rather, our study of syntax will be an attempt to find a definition of the concept.

To begin with, we will adopt the following strategy: let us assume that sentences are merely unstructured strings of words. That is, given that we can recognize that sentences are made up of individual words, it would seem that the minimal assumption we could make would be that sentences are nothing more than words strung out in linear order, one after another. If we examine some of the formal properties of sentences in the light of this strategy, we will quickly discover whether our unstructured string hypothesis is tenable or whether we will be forced to adopt a hypothesis that attributes greater complexity to sentences.

If we adopt the hypothesis that sentences are unstructured strings of words, then almost immediately we must add an important qualification. One of the first things we notice about the sentences of human languages is that the words in a sentence occur in a certain linear order. Although some languages display some considerable freedom of word order (Latin and Russian), in no human language may the words of a sentence occur in any random order whatsoever. The linear order of words plays a crucial role in determining the meaning of sentences. For example, The cat bit the dog means very different from The dog bit the cat, even though the very same words are used in both. Therefore, we might say that sentences are unstructured strings of words, but we must ensure that we specify at least a linear order for those words.

Every language has a limited number of basic sentence types from which sentences can be enlarged. The fundamental technique in syntactic analysis is to enlarge a sentence from one of these basic types by a process of successive modification:
Trained teachers willingly teach hardworking school-children.

The substitutes progressively enlarges the sentence, but the basic pattern is not altered in any way.

**Tree Diagrams**

The complexity of how a sentence is layered can be demonstrated clearly by a tree diagram. It is called a tree diagram because its branches resemble that of a tree. In a tree diagram, a basic sentence type at the top, branches out downward progressively to become more complex.

trained teachers willingly teach hardworking school-children. The tree diagram can be labelled so that the construction becomes clearer:
The whole process of syntactic analysis is sometimes referred to as bracketing and labelling. Closely related constituents are bracketed together and then given the appropriate syntactic label. In the above diagram, Adjective + Noun are bracketed together under the label NP (Noun Phrase).

The bracketting and labelling of successive layers of constituents is common to all syntactic analyses—though linguists differ as to how the constituents should be bracketed. They also disagree about the number of layers into which a sentence can usefully be analysed.

An alternative way of expressing the information found on a tree diagram is by means of rewrite rules. A rewrite rule is a replacement rule, in which the symbol to the left of an arrow is replaced by an expanded form written to the right of the arrow:

e.g.  \[ S \rightarrow NP + VP \]

On a tree diagram, this would appear as:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
\downarrow \\
NP \quad VP
\end{array}
\]

The sentence trained teachers willingly teach hardworking school-children could be written as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
S & \rightarrow NP + VP \\
VP & \rightarrow VP + NP \\
NP & \rightarrow Adjective + Noun \\
VP & \rightarrow Adverb + Verb \\
Adjective & \rightarrow trained, hardworking \\
Noun & \rightarrow teachers, school-children \\
Adverb & \rightarrow willingly \\
Verb & \rightarrow teach
\end{align*}
\]
The advantage of rewrite rules is that they are perfectly explicit. They do not leave anything to the imagination. By following them, one could produce a perfect English sentence even if you did not know any English, since the rules are applied mechanically step-by-step, one symbol at a time.

Discontinuous Constituents

The analysis of constituents can be a lot more difficult than what had plotted. A problem occurs when we are confronted by discontinuous constituents:

e.g. The boy switched the power off

He switched the power off

Phrase Structure Rules

Within the standard transformational model it is assumed that basic phrase markers are generated by phrase structure rules (PS rules) as follows:

\[
S \rightarrow NP \text{ Aux VP} \\
NP \rightarrow *\text{Art} \ N \\
VP \rightarrow \forall \ NP
\]

Each rule is essentially a formula, or specification, for how the constituent represented by a certain symbol - the symbol on the left of the arrow - can be constituted in a tree diagram. For example, PS rule tell us that S (sentence) can consist of, or can be expanded as, the sequence NP Aux VP.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
| \\
NP & Aux & VP
\end{array}
\]
Consider again the phrase structure rules, in particular the rule for NP and VP. Notice that An NP must consist of an N, which forms the head of the NP; and a VP must consist of a V, which forms the head of the VP. A noun phrase is called a noun phrase because it has a noun as its head; similarly a verb phrase is called a verb phrase because it has a verb as its head. This has led to the suggestion that for each of the lexical categories N (noun), V (verb), A (adjective), and P (preposition), there is a corresponding phrasal category NP (noun phrase), VP (verb phrase), AP (adjective phrase) and PP (prepositional phrase).

**Embedding**

An interesting consequence of the rules is that we can generate a potentially infinite number of noun phrases. This is so because the PS rule for NP may be expanded to contain PP, which in turn contains an NP, which itself may be expanded to contain a PP; and so on indefinitely. This is one of the ways in which a finite set of rules can generate an infinite set of structures.
The above tree demonstrates structures of what is called right-branching. In contrast, we can also generate structures which involve left-branching. Now let us consider generating a tree with the following PS rules:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP} & \rightarrow \text{Possessive (Poss) N} \\
\text{Poss} & \rightarrow \text{NP Poss-Affix}
\end{align*}
\]

This rule states that an NP may have an optional possessive phrase preceding the head noun. A possessive phrase consists of an NP followed by an Affix, in this case 's.
Deep and Surface Structure

Perhaps the greatest weakness of straightforward constituent analysis is its inability to distinguish between deep and surface structures. In a language, it often happens that two sentences are superficially alike, but basically quite different:

e.g.

The eel was anxious to eat.
The eel was delicious to eat.

These sentences both follow the same grammatical pattern, and have the same phrase marker:

The eel was anxious to eat. The eel was delicious to eat.

The first sentence tells us that the eel is doing the eating. But the second sentence, however, tells us that the eel is being eaten. The difference is shown clearly if the sentences are switched around:

Eating the eel was delicious.

*Eating the eel was anxious.

In such cases, linguists say that the sentences have a similar surface structure, but the deep structures are different.

Exercise

1. What is meant by bracketing and labelling?

2. The following tree diagram has been left incomplete. Fill in the blanks with appropriate word that would fit the structure.

```
S
 /    \
NP     VP
 /      /
Art    N  PP  V
      /
  Prep  NP
     /
    Art  N
```

44
3. Draw tree diagrams for the following noun phrases:
   a. the weather in England
   b. the red dog
   c. the house near the mountain

4. What is embedding?

5. Define a sentence.
Unit 5: SEMANTICS

Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
1. explain the nature of meaning;
2. state the contribution of syntactic structure to the interpretation of meaning and
3. explain semantic relationships like synonymy, homophony and antonymy

Required Reading


Outline of Unit

• What is semantics?
• Words and meaning
• What is meaning?
• Suggestions for determining the precise nature of meaning
• Semantic relations among words
• Semantic relations involving sentences

*Note: The material you read in this unit is meant to act as a GUIDE to the readings required from the prescribed text
When we think of words such as 'beauty', 'goodness', 'love', you and I would probably not agree on what each of these words implies. A person may seem good to me but may look like a hypocrite to you. Similarly, we all think we know what we mean by 'girl' and 'woman', but at what age does a girl cease to be a girl? - at thirteen? fifteen? eighteen? Meaning therefore may vary and should not be taken for granted. We often believe that the meaning of a word is its dictionary definition. However, native speakers of a language use words long before they know how to use a dictionary. In this unit, we will consider semantics, word meanings and their use in the language.

SEMANTICS

I have attempted to provide a few definitions of Semantics for you to consider.

The study of the relationship between symbol and meaning is called Semantics (West, 1975).

Semantics is the study of meanings (Dill, 1977).

Semantics is the study of meaning in human language (O'Grady and Dobrovolsky, 1991).

The study of the linguistic meaning of words, phrases, and sentences is called Semantics (Fromkin and Rodman, 1993).

Speech is a result of man's ability to see phenomena symbolically. He is able to make certain things stand for other things, and this we call the symbolic process. However, communication demands that two or more people agree on what the symbols stand for. The study of the relationship between symbol and meaning is called Semantics.

The word Semantics originates from the Greek verb semeion which means mark, sign. The word was coined in the late nineteenth century.
Words and Meaning

The analysis of meaning has proved to be difficult and elusive task in linguistic description. This is because it involves investigating the relationship between language and everything that we use language to talk about. This amounts to the entire world! An understanding of how we use language to talk about the world is fundamental in appreciating how communication works.

If there were a one-to-one relationship between the symbol (word) and the referent (thing), semantics and communication in general would be a fairly simple affair. But such is not the case.

Referent is a modern term for things in so far as they are named or signified by words. Therefore we are able to say that the relationship which holds between words and things (their referents) is the relationship of reference.

Please note that words refer to rather than signify or name things.

Another attempt to explain meaning can be inferred from the diagram below:

Triangle of Signification
(sometimes referred to as the semiotic triangle)

The dotted line between the form and the referent is intended to indicate that the relationship between them is indirect. The form is related to its referent through the mediating (conceptual) meaning associated with both independently.
Introduction to General Linguistics
Study Guide

This explanation attempts to say that words refer to concepts and that there is an indirect relationship of reference. We can accept this idea partly because we can say that people (i.e. you and I) have an idea or concept of love, kindness or quickly and that these words refer to those mental concepts. But think about what happens with words like ‘although’, ‘however’, ‘if’, etc. Therefore, the notion of mental concept doesn’t provide us an understanding of what is shared by speakers of the same language about the meaning of a word and what makes communication in the exchange of meaning possible.

• What is meaning?

What do we mean when we talk about meaning? Philosophers, logicians and anthropologists, as well as linguists, have grappled with the issue for a long time. Below are some of the ways man have proposed to answer the question, what is meaning?

Before you attempt to read the ways man have proposed to define meaning below, please read pages 124-128 of your text. Meanings of words and morphemes are discussed on those pages.

1. The meaning of a word is the thing it names. (naïve realism)

Thing must of course be understood in a sense broad enough to encompass objects like ‘pencil’, abstractions like ‘order’, qualities like ‘red’, actions like ‘eat’, relations like ‘above’ etc.

But if we think about this we will realize that there are several problems with this view.

a. firstly, there are various words that have quite clear and distinct meanings but they do not name any existing thing, however broadly we may interpret the word thing. An example would be the word ‘unicorn’. (We all know what the word unicorn means, but since the unicorn is a mystical beast, there are no things for the word to name).
Introduction to General Linguistics
Study Guide

2. The meaning of a word is an idea associated with it in the mind.

This view of meaning usually called mentalism, solves most of the difficulties associated with its opposite, naïve realism by bringing meaning into the mind. However, it creates new problems of its own. When we describe anything, we often seek to explain the less familiar in terms of the more familiar. Thus, if you want to know what a sand dollar is, you would rather be told that it is an animal with a thin, pancake-shaped brittle shell and a star-like pattern of markings that lives on the bottom of the ocean, than be told it is the Echinarchnus parma. Using the name Echinarchnus parma is more exact, but it is less helpful to most of us. The problem with defining the word meaning in terms of ideas is roughly analogous, although not so obvious. We talk about ideas all the time, but the nature of an idea proves even more difficult to grasp than the nature of meaning. Indeed, the definitions of idea are often circular. An idea may be defined as a concept, and a concept as a thought, and a thought as an idea. Since ideas are even fuzzier and more abstract than meaning, they are not of much help in explaining the latter.

I think describing/explaining the less familiar in terms of the most familiar is something we always attempt to do. But as shown above it can be rather difficult.

3. The meaning of a word is our disposition to respond in a certain way to that word as a result of our past experiences.

This way of looking at meaning is, like the mentalist definition, a psychological view, but it is based on quite a different psychology. Instead of talking about thoughts or ideas in the mind, which can be known only
by looking within ourselves, it talks about the way we behave, something that can be observed from outside and measured. It is called a *behaviorist*

definition. The difficulty with it is that it is not much better in practice than the mentalist one. If we were to say that the meaning of a word is the way we behave when we hear it, then we would have a kind of meaning that could be observed and recorded. But in fact, much of the time when we are using language, for example, in a classroom— we don’t ‘behave’ at all, at least not in any way that would help us much with the meaning of words. We just sit and listen or talk. Any overt, behavior is likely to be unrelated to the meaning of what we hear or say.

*Besides it could and would be very difficult for us to ‘behave’ for every word we hear.*

4. **The meaning of a word is the characteristic that is common to the set of things named by the word.**

This way of looking at meaning. It is an effort to salvage what was useful in the realistic view of meaning, without confusing meaning with things named. The notion of sets has been popularized by New Mathematics and is now widespread. It defines a set as a number of things that are somehow alike. The likeness that the things share is the characteristic that defines the set. Thus being an animal with four legs is the characteristic that defines a set of the very many things we call quadrupeds, which means that the word ‘quadruped’ means an animal with four legs. Similarly, being a horse-like animal with one horn is a characteristic that defines a set of things we call ‘unicorns’. The fact that there are no unicorns is immaterial. A set can exist without any members and is then called ‘empty’. To put the matter quite simply, all things we experience or imagine can be sorted out into sets. Whatever characteristic must be true of a thing for it to belong to a particular set is the meaning of the word that names the set. However, this definition may be inadequate at times e.g. it is hard to know what things are named by the italicized words in the following sentences or what characteristics pertain to them.

*It’s time to go.*

*There* is a fly in here.
Do you like geography?

I'm sure you can understand the above explanation that it can be rather difficult to identify what is being 'named' by some words.

5. The meaning of a word is its relation to other features of the verbal and situation context in which it occurs.

Suppose while reading you come across this sentence -- She carried a piggin in her left hand. You have never before in your life encountered the word piggin. Do you rush to a dictionary to find out what it means? Probably not. You are more likely to read the sentence twice, give a mental shrug, and go on reading. You know a piggin is a thing a woman can carry in one hand, and that seems to be all you need to know about it for the time being. Then on the same page you find this sentence -- Farther on she could stoop in one place and cover the bottom of her piggin with a deep layer of the purple berries. So you know that piggins have bottoms and have something to do with berries. You may not know everything about piggins, but you have a fairly accurate notion of what one is, and you got that notion from the sentence in which you encountered piggin, by observing its relations to the words around it. We might therefore say that the meaning of a word is its relation to other words in the verbal context. We also of course learn meaning by observing the relation of words to things in the non-linguistic context -- the situation in which language is used -- e.g. as a child learns the meaning of dog by hearing the word while he sees the creature, or as we learn about a new space vehicle as we see it on television.

A word thus has a two-fold context. It has a place it occupies relative to other words (verbal context) and it has a use relative to the world of things and people (situational context). The meaning of the word can be its relation to both of these contexts.

Linguists study meaning in order to understand why certain words and constructions can be combined together in a semantically acceptable way, while others cannot. For example, it is alright to say: My brother is a bachelor. The deer remained alive for an hour after the hunter shot it but it is not alright to say: !My brother is a
spinster! The deer remained alive for an hour after the hunter killed it.  
(An exclamation mark [!] indicates a semantically impossible sentence). A linguist studying semantics would also like to know why anyone who knows a language can recognize certain phrases and sentences as having similar meanings. However, defining meaning is often a problem, as we have seen above and have been of interest to linguists for some time.

Some other suggestions for determining the precise nature of meaning

As mentioned above, linguists have spent many tiresome hours attempting to define meaning. Below are some further suggestions on how to tackle the issue.

Extension and Intension

The impossibility of equating a word’s meaning with its referents has led to a distinction between extension and intension. A word’s extension corresponds to the set of entities that it picks out in the world, its intension corresponds to its inherent sense, the concepts that it evokes.

The concept of referent was discussed earlier on in this. If you still do not understand, page 147 of the text explains the concept clearly.

E.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Extension</th>
<th>Intension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister of Malaysia</td>
<td>Dr. Mahathir b. Mohamed</td>
<td>leader of the majority party in Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital of Selangor</td>
<td>Shah Alam</td>
<td>city containing state legislature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the extension of man would be a set of real world entities (men) while its intension would involve notions like male and human.
The distinction between a word’s intension and its extension does not allow us to resolve the question of meaning. It simply permits us to pose it in a new way -- what is the nature of a word’s inherent sense or intension?

We could say that word meanings (intensions), correspond to mental images. This is conceivable as one might have a mental image of a unicorn or a dragon even if there are no such entities in the real world. Unfortunately, this idea also encounters difficulties. For one thing, it is hard to conceive of a mental image for words like nitrogen, 522, 101, if, very, and so on. Moreover, there seems to be no mental image for the meaning of the word dog that could be general enough to include Chihuahuas and Irish wolfhounds, yet exclude foxes and wolves.

As stated earlier, You will need to read and understand p. 147-148 of F & R to better understand the concepts above. The text provides further examples.

- Semantic features

Still another approach to meaning tries to equate a word’s intension with an abstract concept consisting of smaller components called semantic features. This componental analysis is especially effective when it comes to representing similarities and differences among words with related meanings. The feature analysis below for the words man, woman, boy and girl illustrate this.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{man} & \quad \begin{cases} +\text{HUMAN} \\ +\text{MALE} \\ +\text{ADULT} \end{cases} & \quad \text{boy} & \quad \begin{cases} +\text{HUMAN} \\ +\text{MALE} \\ -\text{ADULT} \end{cases} \\
\text{woman} & \quad \begin{cases} +\text{HUMAN} \\ -\text{MALE} \\ =\text{ADULT} \end{cases} & \quad \text{girl} & \quad \begin{cases} +\text{HUMAN} \\ -\text{MALE} \\ -\text{ADULT} \end{cases}
\end{align*}
\]

An obvious advantage of this approach is that it allows us to group entities into natural classes. Componental analysis gives its most impressive results when applied to sets of words referring to classes of entities with shared properties. However, we can say, that the meaning of blue consists of the feature [color]
and something else? If so, what is the other thing? Isn’t it blueness? If that were so, then we have been unsuccessful in breaking the meaning of blue into smaller features, and we are actually back where we started.

Make sure you read p. 124-128 of F & R for further explanation on what you have just read. Also attempt to answer question 1.E from F & R on pp. 167. Your answers should be related to written material and items used to write.

Also attempt this question below.

**Question:** How would you describe the oddness in the following sentences using semantic features?

a. The radio ate my rice.
b. Her cat studies linguistics

**Answers:**

a. The verb *ate* requires a subject with the feature + animate. (radio has the feature - animate)
b. The verb *studies* requires a subject with the feature + human (cat has the feature - human)

**Semantic relations among words**

Despite the difficulties associated with determining the precise nature of meaning, it is possible to identify a number of important universal semantic relations relevant to the analysis of word meaning, e.g. synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, and homophony.

- **Synonymy**

Words or expressions that have identical meanings are called synonyms.
e.g. *some English synonyms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>youth</th>
<th>adolescent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>automobile</td>
<td>car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remember</td>
<td>recall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purchase</td>
<td>buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big</td>
<td>large</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Refer to examples of synonymy on page 131 of F & R. Enjoy the short reading from "The Abond of Swat" by Edward Lear.

- **Antonymy**
  Words or phrases that have opposite meanings are called *antonyms*.

e.g. *some English antonyms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dark</th>
<th>light</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hot</td>
<td>cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up</td>
<td>down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please make sure you read about relational opposites on page 133.
Enjoy the cartoon strips on pages 134 and 135

- **Polysemy and Homophony**
  When a word has two or more meanings that are at least vaguely related to each other, this is called *polysemy*.

e.g. *some English polysemous words*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>iron</th>
<th>a type of metal</th>
<th>an instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(made of iron)</td>
<td>(made of iron)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for pressing clothes</td>
<td>for pressing clothes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Homophones are words that have a single phonetic form but two or more entirely distinct meanings. In such cases, it is assumed that there are two separate words with the same pronunciation (rather than a single word with two related meanings).

E.g. Some English homophones:

- bat: a winged rodent; a piece of equipment used in baseball
- bank: a commercial lending institution; a small cliff at the edge of a river
- club: a social organization; a blunt weapon
- pen: a writing instrument; a small cage

Polysemy and homophony create lexical ambiguity in that a single word has two or more meanings. Thus a sentence such as (i) could mean Liza purchased an instrument to write with or she bought a small cage.

(i) Liza bought a pen.

However, in actual speech the context usually makes the intended meaning clear. Thus it is improbable that anyone would perceive ambiguity in a sentence such as (ii) below. Context often plays an important role in guessing meaning.
Ambiguity is a concept that you have to understand fully. Refer to p. 129 of F & R to understand further how homonyms can create ambiguity.

Semantic Relations involving Sentences

Like words, sentences have meanings that can be analyzed in terms of their relation to each other. Three such relations are paraphrase, entailment and contradiction.

- **Paraphrase**
  Two sentences with identical meanings are said to be paraphrases of each other.
  The following pairs of sentences provide examples of complete and near paraphrases.

(i)  
  a. The police chased the burglar.
      b. The burglar was chased by the police.

(ii) 
  a. I gave the summons to Ellina.
      b. I gave Ellina the summons.

(iii) 
  a. It is unfortunate that Misbun lost the match.
      b. Unfortunately, Misbun lost the match.

(iv) 
  a. The game will begin at 3 pm.
      b. At 3 pm, the game will begin.

The \( a \) and \( b \) in each of the above pairs are obviously very similar in meaning. It would be impossible for one sentence to be true without the other also being true. Thus if it is true that the police chased the burglar, then it must also be true that the burglar was chased by the police. For some linguists, the fact that two sentences must either be both true or both false is an indication that they have the same meaning. However, you may notice that there are subtle differences in emphasis between \( a \) and \( b \) in sentences (i) - (iv). For instance, (i) \( a \) is interpreted
as a statement about what the police did and (i) b as a statement about what happened to the burglar. Similarly, (iv) b seems to place more emphasis on the starting time of the game than (iv) a does. Some linguists feel that it would be inefficient for a language to retain two or more structures with absolutely identical meanings and that perfect paraphrases therefore do not exist.

• **Entailment**

A relation in which the truth of one sentence necessarily implies the truth of another, as in examples (i) - (iv) above, is called entailment. In the above examples, the entailment relation between the a and b sentences is mutual since the truth of either member of the pair guarantees the truth of the other. In some cases, however, entailment is asymmetrical. The following examples illustrate this.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(v)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. The police wounded the burglar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The burglar is injured.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| (vi) | | 
| a. The house is red. |  
| b. The house is not white. |  

The a sentences in (v) and (vi) entail the b sentences. If it is true that the police wounded the burglar, then it must also be true that the burglar is injured. However, the reverse does not follow since the burglar could be injured without the police having wounded him. Similarly, if it is true that the house is red, then it is also true that it cannot be white. Once again though, the reverse does not hold -- even if we know that the house is not white, we cannot conclude that it must be red.

• **Contradiction**

Sometimes, the truth of one sentence entails the falsity of another. For e.g.

| (vii) |      |
| a. Charles is a bachelor. |  
| b. Charles is married. |  

If it is true that Charles is a bachelor, then it cannot be true that he is married. A relationship wherein the truth of one sentence entails the falsity of another sentence in this way is called a contradiction.
After reading the notes provided in this unit and pp. 124-157 of F & R, it will be clear to you that language can be characterized as a system which links form and meaning. That is for every form in a language - say, the sequence of sounds p-a-p-e-r or the sequence of sounds represented by [pepr] - there is some meaning associated with it. The meaning is what enables you to look at the flat sheet in front of you now, and know that someone is talking about the substance it is made of. However, from your readings above you would also realize that there is more to meaning than what we can see in the meanings of simple, individual words. Studying meanings is not an easy task and there are still many questions about meaning which remain unanswered as meaning is never absolute.

Further Reading

The following are some references you may want to refer to.

(i) A good basic coursebook on semantics is by
    Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

(ii) A preview of the psychology of word meaning may be found in
    Library.

(iii) A general reading of Semantics may be found in
Questions

Attempt to answer all questions below to check whether you have understood your prescribed reading and notes provided in this study guide.

1. Offer synonyms for the underlined words in the following sentences:
   a. We saw a tiny child.
   b. He hid the news from his father and mother.
   c. She could not tolerate the noise.
   d. He was overcome by the nasty effluvium.

2. Give the most appropriate antonyms for the underlined items in the following sentences:
   a. It was the smallest elephant I had ever seen.
   b. My coffee is cold.
   c. He has dark hair.
   d. He disappeared.
   e. We arrived at noon.

3. Examine the following sentences carefully and try to establish a hierarchy of the verbs used. (Place the most general verb at the top).
   a. He rushed down the road.
   b. He went down the road.
   c. He walked down the road.
   d. He strolled down the road.
   e. He ran down the road.

4. Put the following lists into taxonomic hierarchies.
   a. rose, plant, tea-rose, dog-rose, flower, daisy
   b. tea, coffee, beverage, milk, black coffee, sugared coffee
5. What is the basic lexical relation between the following pairs of words?

   a. shallow  deep
   b. mature   ripe
   c. suite    sweet
   d. table    furniture
   e. single   married
   f. move     run

6. Strings of words that can be assigned more than one syntactic tree are structurally ambiguous. Each of the following examples below exhibits this type of ambiguity. Illustrate the ambiguity by showing the meanings of each phrase.

   a. foreign car mechanic
   b. The sheriff shot the man with the rifle.
   c. intelligent students and professors
   d. old building committee
   e. Japanese language teacher
Answers

1. There are a number of possible answers. I provide only one in each case.
   a. small, very small
   b. concealed, parents
   c. stand, din
   d. bad smell

2. Again, there are a number of possible answers but I only provide one of several acceptable alternatives.
   a. largest
   b. hot
   c. light colored
   d. appeared
   e. departed

3. 
   
   
   
   
   
   went

   rushed  walked
   
   ran  strolled

   'rushed' and 'strolled' are mutually exclusive and so are 'rushed' and 'walked', 'ran' and 'walked', and 'ran' and 'strolled'.

4. 
   
   
   
   
   
   plant  beverage
   
   flower  coffee  tea  milk
   
   dairy  rose  black  sugared
   
   tea-rose  dog-rose  coffee  coffee
5.  
   a. antonymy
   b. synonymy
   c. homophony
   d. hyponymy
   e. antonymy
   f. hyponymy

6. I have attempted to provide the explanations showing the difference by using a slash (/).

   a. foreign car/mechanic
      foreign/car mechanic

   b. The sheriff shot the man/with the rifle
      The sheriff shot/the man with the rifle

   c. intelligent/students and professors
      intelligent students/and professors

   d. old/building committee
      old building/committee

   e. Japanese/language teacher
      Japanese language/teacher

Always remember that you may discuss possible answers with your tutor.
Unit 6: HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS

Learning Objectives
At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. give an account of the basic history of languages;
2. state the family of languages;
3. explain the changes in languages;
4. explain the creation of pidgin, creoles & lingua franca.

Required Reading

Outline of Unit
• What is Historical Linguistics?
• How languages are traced?
• Language Change
• The Social aspects of language

*Note: The material you read in this unit is meant to act as a GUIDE to the readings required from the prescribed text.
What is Historical Linguistics?

Historical Linguistics is a subfield of linguistics. It tries to describe and explain the changes that occur in a language during its history. This branch of linguistics started in the late 18th century when scholars in Western Europe realized that there were some similarities in linguistic characteristics between modern European languages and Sanskrit, Latin and Greek. The phenomenon led linguists to believe these languages must have emerged from one and the same ancestor mother language. That language was called Proto-Indo-European (PIE).
Proto-Indo-European Language Family Tree

Since these languages (modern European languages, Sanskrit, Latin and Greek) are believed to be the descendants of one common language, the PIE, there must be a reason or reasons that made them change into different languages. One of the causes is due to geographical factors. As people move from place to place in their such for new areas to dwell, they became separated from each other. As time went on, the language of each group experienced its own changes and consequently became different from the others. Initially the changes were minor, but gradually the languages very different from one another.

Languages change in all aspects of grammar, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Linguists determined these changes by applying the comparative method. The aim of this method is to reconstruct proto-languages, i.e. languages believed to be the ancestors of modern languages, through the comparison of related languages.

In keeping with the analogy of language relationships to human families, the theory makes use of the terms mother (as mentioned above) daughter, and sister languages. French and Spanish are said to be sisters, being daughters of Latin, while English is the daughter of Germanic. The diagram above shows the direction of change and the relationships among languages clearly, the older stages being located higher in the tree and direct descendants being linked to their ancestors through the straight lines or branches.

However, a disadvantage exists in that the structure of the family tree may lead people to develop faulty views of two aspects of language change: 1. that each language forms a uniform speech community without internal variation and without contact with its neighbour languages, so that all speakers of Latin, for example, are assumed to have spoken exactly the same way at the time French and Spanish split off; and 2. that the split of a parent language into its daughter languages is a sudden occurrence, happening without intermediate stages.
These **two** views are not supported by the linguistic evidence we have from modern languages. No language is uniform or isolated from others, but is always made up of dialects which are still recognized as belonging to the same language, and always shares similarities with other languages in its family, even those belonging to a different subgroup. Studies of modern language change show, languages do **not** split apart abruptly but rather drift apart indiscernibly, starting as dialects and only ending up as separate languages after years of gradual change as mentioned earlier.

The **Comparative Method**

To trace the relationships among languages systematic comparisons of languages have to make the systematic comparisons can determine what languages have descended from a common parent language and how closely related they are.

Two factors help to distinguish language relationships. Firstly, the relationship between the form of a word and the meaning of a word is arbitrary. In other words, we can assume that two or more language which share words of similar form and meaning are related, meaning to say that they originated from one common parent language. Secondly sounds do not change randomly but regularly.

When a language undergoes a certain sound change, that change will eventually be reflected systematically throughout the vocabulary of that language. If a language undergoes a change of [p] to [f], then every [p] in every word is replaced by [f]. Similarly, if a language undergoes a change where [b] is replaced by [v] between vowels, then every [b] between two vowels would change to [v].

These then are the two tendencies which make it possible for linguists to establish language relationships. The arbitrary relationship between a word's form and meaning is important because it makes it highly unlikely that unrelated languages will share large numbers of words of similar form and meaning. The regularity of sound change is important because it means that two or more language which are related will show regular sound correspondences. For example:
The example above demonstrates the comparison of vowels in all four languages for the word *man* from which we can deduce the following correspondence: [m] in English corresponds to [a] in German, Swedish and Dutch. In order for this correspondence to be regular, it must occur in other words which have similar form and meaning.

Besides the discussion of similarities between languages to show that the languages dealt with are related, linguists go much further to discover how languages which are related develop from the parent language into their present forms.

For the linguists to discover how languages developed from a parent language, the latter has to be retraceable. For the romance languages like French, Spanish, Portuguese and Rumanian the parent language (Vulgar Latin) is attested by numerous written records like manuscripts, public inscriptions and tombstones. Consequently it is possible to trace the development of the various Romance languages from their parent with considerable accuracy. In some cases there are no records available. However, it is possible to infer what the parent language was by comparing the forms and grammar of the related languages. As comparison of words of similar form and meaning in the related languages is involved the method is called the comparative method.

As an example we have seen that in English, German, Dutch and Swedish the word *man* begins with the sound [m] and the final sound is [n]. Hence we can say that the parent language had an initial [m] and a final [n] in the word [man], so that we can reconstruct *m-n* in our Proto-language. With respect to the vowel sound there is some uncertainty because there is variation in the sound: English has [æ] while German, Dutch and Swedish have [a]. Since three out of four languages have [a], it is right to assume that this is the sound the parent language had.
The comparative method reconstructs the proto-form of the parent language from cognates of languages which are thought to be related. When the parent language is reconstructed it is possible to determine the changes by which the daughter languages have become distinct by comparing the reconstructed forms with the forms present in the daughter languages.

**Language Change**

Language change is about the transformation of language through time. Just as cultures are alive and always changing, so is language. If a language does not adapt through time, there is a tendency that it will become extinct. There are two principal types of language change: historical change and contemporary change.

**Historical Language Change**

Languages evolve historically. This is how different language begin by diverging from one another to eventually become separate languages all together. The historical development has been categorized into four stages. They are Old English (449-1100), Middle English (1100-1500) and Early Modern English and Modern English (1500-present).

**Old English**

Wolde guman findan pone pe him on sweofote sare geteode.
(He wanted to find the man who harmed him while he slept.)

**Middle English (Canterbury Tales)**

Whan that Aprille with his shoueres soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote...

(When April with its showers)
(The fraught of March has pierced to the root...)
Early Modern (Shakespeare)

A man may fish with the worm that hath ear of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

Modern English (Charles Dickens)

It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever.

As shown, both the structure and sound of English has changed a lot through time. Old English is so different from modern English that although the text is translated it seems like a foreign language. As English changed in pronunciation, certain vowels are dropped from the end of words. The consonants were retained to contain the meaning. If the trend continues one day the word autumn may be spelled as autum.

Change in languages is not limited to the past. It is occurring everyday. Dialects are language variations of a language shared by particular communities. English has various dialects. For example, British English, American English, Australian English and Canadian English. Within these dialects there are sub-dialects as well. For example, regional dialects. As suggested earlier, language change is ongoing and it is almost not immediately felt. A language experiences change as the speakers go through change in their everyday lifestyle. As seen, the world community is undergoing drastic changes with the influence of various technologies. The changes affect languages in use.
Pidgins, Creoles and Lingua Franca

Another aspect of language change is the creation of pidgins, creoles and lingua francas. Pidgins are simplified languages created for communication between people who cannot understand the languages of one another. It is commonly used at trading ports and cities. Pidgins serve a specific purpose and are only used in that context. Example:

Mipela I save selum ol pik bilong kaikai long ol sing sing pati ia... na ol pik I hevi tumas... tasol Isuzu KB20 em I gutwan tru long karim ol I go

We frequently sell pigs for eating at dance parties. But pigs are very heavy so Isuzu KB20s are excellent to carry them all away.

Creoles are pidgins that are adopted by a group of people as their first language. When a pidgin is taught to children in the house or community, it becomes a creole. One good example is the Baba and Nyonya language used by the straits Chinese in Singapore, Penang and Melaka (where the usage is thriving with strength). As a pidgin, the language was initially used by traders from China who visited the South East Asia region for commercial purposes. When the traders chose to dwell in the region they held on to the language, which subsequently became their first language.

Lingua Francas are complete other languages adopted by groups of people for communication and trade. The distinction between them and pidgins and creoles is that the languages chosen are not modified for convenient purposes by the speakers or users. English is said to be the most important lingua franca in the world today. And in the local scenerio Bahasa Melayu is our lingua franca.
Exercises

1. What are the sister languages of Polish, serbo-Croatian, Ukrainian and Breton?

2. What do you understand the Comparative Method?

3. Why do languages change?

4. Why contemporary English is as it is today?

5. How does a pidgin develop?
UNIT

7

LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL CONTEXTS
Unit 7: LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. explain fundamental sociolinguistic concepts;
2. explain regional and social variation of language and
3. discuss the complexity of a speech community.

Required Reading


Outline of Unit

- Sociolinguistics
- Fundamental sociolinguistic concepts
- Special languages
- Mixed languages

*Note: The material you read in this unit is meant to act as a GUIDE to the readings required from the prescribed text*
Linguists are interested in all languages of the world and in all the varieties that are found, the standard and the non-standard, the prestigious and the stigmatized. They recognize that languages cannot exist without people.

What do you think of the quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson on page 275 of F & R?

LANGUAGE IN SOCIETY

The subdiscipline of linguistics that treats the social aspects of language is called sociolinguistics.

It is important for you to note that sociolinguistics concentrates on language in societies. In other words, it tries to examine how and why people use language as they interact with other members of their society.

Fundamental Concepts

• Speech community

According to George Yule (1996), a speech community is a group of people who share a set of norms, rules and expectations regarding the use of language.

All sociolinguistic studies concern language in a social context, treating speakers as members of social groups. The group isolated for study is called the speech community. Depending on the study, the speech community may have as few members as a family or as many members as China. The important characteristic is that the members of the speech community must, in some reasonable way, interact linguistically with other members of the community eg. they share closely related language varieties.
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Language in Society

Generally, sociolinguistics deals with the inter-relationships between language and society. It is often said to have connections with anthropology, sociology and culture.

- **Speech variety or Language variety**

  The term *speech variety* or *language variety* refers to any distinguishable form of speech used by a speaker or group of speakers. The distinguishing characteristics of a *speech variety* may be lexical, phonological, morphological, or syntactic. There are three types of *speech varieties*:

  i. **social** speech varieties (social dialects or sociolects)
  ii. **regional** speech varieties (or regional dialects)
  iii. **functional** speech varieties (or registers)

  Sociolinguistics examines variety in language and has shown that language is not merely used to communicate ideas but also to communicate on opinion of others and of ourselves. E.g. even the simplest utterance 'Hello' can reveal that the speaker wishes to be friendly and informal, and that he or she is probably not an American - as Americans prefer to say Hi!

- **Standard**

  The *standard* is a single speech variety which is perceived by members of the community to be higher in status and more correct than the others.

  What do you think of 'language purists'? Can you honestly believe that one can prevent language from changing? Read the interesting quips by George Bernard Shaw, Mary Norton and George Philip Krapp on pp. 283 of F & R.

- **Idiolect**

  While sociolects are defined by the linguistic differences associated with definable social groups in a single geographic area, *regional dialects* are associated with the
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linguistic traits shared by social groups in a single geographic area. Clearly, the variety spoken by any single speaker, the idiolect will be jointly determined by the sociolect and regional dialect appropriate to that individual.

Social dialects on the other hand are said to be varieties of language used by groups defined according to class, education, age, sex and a number of other social parameters.

• Register

Besides the interspeaker differences in speech associated with the geographical area and social characteristics of the speaker, there are intraspeaker differences associated with the speech situation -- who is being spoken to, the subject of the conversation, who else may be listening, and so on. Thus while most speakers are limited to a single sociolect and geographical dialect, a fluent speaker must employ a variety of registers.

Variation according to specific situations is also studied in terms of register e.g. religious register.

An interesting dialect map about 'cheese' can be found on pp. 281 of F & R. Could you think of a dialect map for the B.M. word 'air' - water. (In the northern most states on the west coast, it is /ayak/. In Perak it is /ayer/. In Selangor it is /ayer/)

• Dialectology

The term dialectology is used to refer to the study of regional dialects. The most characteristic form for the results of dialectological investigations is the dialect atlas. A dialect atlas contains numerous maps that exhibit regional variation in language. The boundaries between dialects are represented on these maps by means of lines called isoglosses. These lines are meant to indicate the feature or features in question; people on one side share one variant while those on the other share a different one.
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The map below illustrates how this technique is applied with respect to an item of everyday vocabulary in the state of Pennsylvania in the US.

Curtains (★)
Blinds ( móc)

Blinds ( móc)

Curtains (★)

Of course isoglosses are idealizations. Not everybody on one side of the line says curtains and not everybody on the other side says blinds. An isogloss is an approximation of where dominant tendencies change.

Enjoy the Ziggy cartoon on page 275 of F & R.

Special languages

The term special language is meant to cover a set of loosely related types of sociolects. These have traditionally been labeled with the terms slang, argot, jargon, and cant.

• Slang

Slang is a label that is frequently used to denote certain informal usages of nearly anyone in the speech community. The term was first attested in English in the mid-eighteenth century, used in reference to 'special vocabulary used by any set of persons of a low or disreputable character; language of a low and vulgar type' (according to the Oxford English dictionary). In the twentieth century, it is often applied to aspects of the language of adolescents.
• Argot

The term *argot* was borrowed from French. It first appeared in print in the early seventeenth century when it was used as the label for the secret language of beggars and street merchants. As the original *argot* developed, it came to include some usages borrowed from Romany, the language of the Gypsies. Later still, it became the language of the French underworld. Since *argot* is now used as a label for any secret language, it may be applied to the language or socioclect of any social group whose members evidence a desire to conceal the content of their communication from some other group or from the majority of the community generally.

> It is interesting to note here that there have been languages and dialects which have been banned as a means of political control e.g. Roman was the only legal language permitted by the Russian tsars who banned the use of Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Georgian, Armenian languages. It has also been said that for many years American Indian languages were banned in Federal and state schools on Native Indian Reservations.

• Jargon

*Jargon* is a loan word from French. It first appeared in print in the thirteenth century with the meaning ‘unintelligible language’. It is now used in English to denote ‘obscure, specialized language’ or ‘vocabulary peculiar to some field’.

> A good example of this would be ‘computerese’ - language for/of computers currently being used today.

> It is said that one of the key features of a register is the use of special - jargon.

• Cant

The term *cant* appeared in English in the early sixteenth century and originally referred to the singing style of beggars. It is assumed to have arisen (probably in
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Language in Society

medieval France) as a verb describing the chanting of mendicant (begging) monks. It later came to be used in an overlapping sense with both jargon and argot. The confusion and ambiguity associated with these terms (jargon and cant) in popular usage is responsible for the coining of the new term sublanguage to denote occupational sociolect.

- Sublanguages

Sublanguages provide a necessarily specialized lexicon by means of which members of a group can communicate efficiently. They are highly structured speech varieties with precise communication functions. Sublanguages are different from the standard in their lexicons but often display synthetic differences as well. Another important aspect of sublanguages is that their appropriate use is based on an assumption of shared knowledge among interactants. If speakers share knowledge of a field and the sublanguage associated with it, they can communicate with a maximum level of efficiency and a minimum of redundancy.

As particular fields make an increasing impact on the majority of society, their sublanguages may also supply the standard language with new lexical items or with new senses of existing forms. The computer, for example, has recently enriched standard English with a number of lexical items eg. boot, bit, byte, software.

Jargon is a form of sublanguage.

It would be beneficial for you to read and understand about 'Black English'. It is an interesting development which takes place on the English language by a distinct group of people. Read pages 287-292 of F & R.

Mixed languages

In the past, when explorers or merchants went out into the world to find new lands or markets or sources of raw material, they often did not share a language with the people with whom they came into contact. When this situation was encountered, one of three solutions was adopted:
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i. the foreigners learned the language of their hosts (or vice versa)
ii. they used some third language commonly employed in the region for
trading purposes, or
iii. a new language emerged made up of elements from the various
native languages of its users.

- **Lingua franca**

Languages that are used for communication among speakers of different languages are called *lingua franca*. The name derives from a medieval trade language used in the Mediterranean region and based largely on Romance languages (Italian, French and Spanish) but also containing elements of Greek, Arabic and Turkish. In the modern world, it is fair to say that English is the most important lingua franca since it is used as a means of communication between large numbers of people who do not otherwise share a common language.

*What do you think of the lingua franca in Malaysia? (BM or English?)*

- **Pidgin**

A *lingua franca* may be the native language of a people (as in Modern English) or it maybe a language that has arisen as a mixture of two or more languages. Such a mixed language is called a *pidgin*. *Pidgins* reflect the influence of the higher (or dominant) language in their lexicon and that of the lower language in their phonology (and occasionally in their syntax). The etymology of the word *pidgin* is disputed, although traditionally it has been assumed to have arisen from a pidgin form of the word *business*. Linguists now use *pidgin* as a label for any language that is historically a mixture of two or more languages and that serves as a lingua franca for groups of speakers but is not the first language of any people.

*Read pages 295-298 of F & R and decide whether pidgins develop into creoles or is it creoles which develop into pidgins?*

- **Creoles**

*Creoles* differ from pidgins in that they are the first language of some group. They do, however, share a common mode of origin with *pidgins*. *Creoles*, are in fact, pidgins that have become established as a first language in some speech
community. The term *creole* came into being as a label for people of Spanish or Portuguese descent born and brought up in South America. It later came to mean persons of mixed race or (black) slaves. Even later, it was a label for the language of these slaves, especially the mixture of French and other languages spoken in Haiti. This mixed language came to be the first language of the Haitian population, and eventually linguists appropriated the term as a generic label for any previously pidginized language that became a first language.

*After reading about language in social contexts, you should be able to understand that language is a formal system which has a social function. People also use languages to accomplish goals.*

**Further Reading**

The following are some references you may want to refer to:

(i) General introductory readings may be found in Romaine, S. 1994. *Language in Society*. Oxford: OUP.

Questions

Attempt to answer all questions below to check whether you have understood your prescribed reading and notes provided in this study guide.

1. ‘Adults alter the way they speak when talking to children’. Discuss.

2. Distinguish between dialect and accent.

3. Below are some words used in British English for which different words are usually used in American English. See if you can
   a. match the British and American equivalents and
   b. identify any word which is used differently in Malaysian English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British</th>
<th>American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. clothes peg</td>
<td>A. candy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. braces</td>
<td>B. truck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. lift</td>
<td>C. line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. pram</td>
<td>D. main street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. waistcoats</td>
<td>E. cookies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. shop assistant</td>
<td>F. suspenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. sweets</td>
<td>G. flashlight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. boot (of car)</td>
<td>H. wrench</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. bobby</td>
<td>I. potato chips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. spanner</td>
<td>J. vacation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. biscuits</td>
<td>K. baby buggy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. queue</td>
<td>L. elevator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. torch</td>
<td>M. can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. underground</td>
<td>N. cop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o. high street</td>
<td>O. wake up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. crisps</td>
<td>P. trunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q. lorry</td>
<td>Q. vest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r. holiday</td>
<td>R. subway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. tin</td>
<td>S. clothes pin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t. knock up</td>
<td>T. clerk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Compile a list of jargon (terms) from some profession or trade (for example, lawyer, musician, doctor). Give a definition for each term in 'non-jargon' terms.

5. In the examples below, try to identify the speakers by age, sex, and / or profession.
   a. Well! Now that we've put on our pretty dress, why don't we comb our hair?
   b. Be very careful not to color outside the lines.
   c. It is with deep regret that I come before you today to make this announcement.
   d. I can understand when I read the book, but the minute you start talking I lose the whole thing.
   e. I wonder if I might share my perceptions with you for a moment.
   f. Isn't she a cute little thing?
   g. Why can't I borrow the car? I'm not going to wear it out, you know.
   h. When I get here I expect to find my dinner on the table, and I don't expect to have to listen to any complaints or excuses. Is that clear?

6. How would you define a speech community?

7. What is meant by the term idiolect?
Answers

1. Adults select what they say to young children by restricting it to the 'here and now'. They also slow down, use short simple sentences and repeat themselves frequently. Each of these modifications seem to be geared to making sure children understand what adults say.

2. Within a speech community, there is a considerable language variation. The speech of its members varies according to many factors, including geographical location, age, occupations, socio-economic status, ethnic group and sex. The most obvious type of variety in a speech community is the use of different dialects. Unfortunately, in everyday usage, the term dialect is often confused with the word accent. A dialect is usually associated with a particular geographical area. The term 'dialect' refers to a far greater difference than mere pronunciation. There are normally differences in syntax and vocabulary too. An accent refers to only a difference in pronunciation. The underlying system and the vocabulary are the same.

3. 

a  S  k  E
b  F  l  C
c  L  m  G
d  K  n  R
e  Q  o  D
f  T  p  I
g  A  q  B
h  P  r  J
i  N  s  M
j  H  t  O

4. Lawyer
   - affidavit
   - hearing
   - power of attorney
   - vacant possession
   - defence
5. a. parent/ little daughter  
b. teacher/ parent - child  
c. someone in authority  
d. student to teacher  
e. two people who are probably not too familiar with each other  
f. two people talking about a little child  
g. child to parent  
h. husband to wife  
employer to maid

6. A speech community is a group of people who share a set of norms, rules and expectations regarding the use of language.

7. Idiolect is the personal dialect of an individual speaker.

Please discuss concepts you are unclear about with your tutor.
Unit 8: WRITING SYSTEMS

Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. state that writing is a symbolic representation of language in storable graphic form and differentiate it from speech;
2. discuss the historical development of writing systems and
3. describe the three types of writing systems

Required Reading


Outline of Unit

- Types of writing
- History of writing
- Non-European writing systems

*Note: The material you read in this unit is meant to act as a GUIDE to the readings required from the prescribed text*
Humans first learned to communicate with each other by sounds and gestures. There was no way of recording communication for archive purposes, or for transmitting to a person who was out of sight or ear shot. Therefore, alternative ways were found to communicate messages in a more permanent form.

WRITING SYSTEMS

You must understand that writing and speech are different even though they both communicate ideas. Please refer to page 363 of F & R for a detailed discussion.

Writing, the symbolic representation of language in storable graphic form, is a comparatively recent cultural development, having occurred over only the past five thousand years. We have no idea where speech began, but we know that writing originated only in certain areas of the world. The contrast between writing and talking comes into sharper focus when we consider that any normal child acquires spoken language without specific formal instruction, while writing must be taught and learned through deliberate effort. While spoken language comes naturally to human beings, writing does not.

You will find the short quips on legends and stories about the invention of writing on pp. 363-364 of F & R interesting.

Types of Writing

Just as spoken language shows an arbitrary link between sound and meaning, written language shows an arbitrary link between symbol and sound. Writing systems can be grouped into three basic types:

i. logographic
ii. syllabic
iii. alphabetic
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The symbols used in each of these types of writing correspond to three principles of linguistic representation: words, syllables, and segments.

- **Logographic writing**

  The term *logographic* (from Greek *logos* ‘word’) refers to a system of writing in which a sign may represent an entire word. For example, imagine that the English word *house* was represented by a stylized drawing of a house: 🏡. If this symbol was read as [haws], we could say that English had a *logographic* writing system. Most logographic signs represent root morphemes. It is rare to find a logographic symbol for an inflectional ending like the plural form.

  *There is an ancient Chinese proverb which says,*  
  *One picture is worth a thousand words.*

  *Do you agree? What are some difficulties one would face if we used only pictures to represent words? Think about this.*

- **Syllabic writing**

  *Syllabic* writing employs signs to represent syllables. A set of syllabic signs is called a *syllabary*. Languages with relatively simple syllabic structures such as CV or CVC (Japanese and Creek, for example) are well suited to this type of writing, since they contain a very limited number of syllable types. In Japanese, the word *kuruma* ‘car’ can be written with three syllabic signs, 富, 車, and まと.

- **Alphabetic writing**

  *Alphabetic* writing represents consonant and vowel segments. Generally, alphabets do not indicate allophonic details of pronunciation and so are largely phonemic in nature. This is illustrated by the English spelling of the words *pat*, *tap* and *apt*, which represent three arrangements of the phoneme /p/, /t/, and /æ/ without indicating (allophonic) aspiration on the consonants. The *International Phonetic Alphabet* is a specialised alphabet devised to represent details of pronunciation.

  *The cartoon on pp. 363 of F & R clearly shows how difficult it is to use pictures to represent meanings.*
The History of Writing

There are many legends and stories about the invention of writing. Your text discusses these on page 364.

The antecedents of writing are buried in the distant past. Figures and scenes depicted on cave walls and rock faces in Europe and Africa twelve thousand years ago or perhaps even earlier may have been forerunners of writing. Such rock paintings is not limited to those continents.

The petroglyphs (scenes painted on stone) of the North American Indians may represent a type of protoliterate stage that did not evolve into a full-fledged writing system.

We are not sure these drawings represent steps toward writing or were even intended for purposes of linguistic communication. Perhaps they were forms of aesthetic expression, perhaps they were employed as a form of magic to guarantee a successful hunt or other benefits or perhaps they were the product of a religious activity.

• Pictograms

Whatever their intent, there is no doubt that pictures were among the precursors of the written word. Pictures from later periods were clearly drawn for purposes of communication. These representations are generally referred to as pictograms or picture writing. Each pictogram was an image of the object it represented, and, as far as we know, offered no clues to pronunciation. Each situation depicted could be understood by the viewer independent of language. This kind of communication has been found among people throughout the ancient world; it has been used by American native peoples, by Africa tribes, by natives of Siberia, and by ancient peoples of the Middle East.

Pictograms are still used today. Signs indicating roadside services are all pictographic in nature. The International Olympic committee has developed a standardised set of pictograms to indicate sporting events.
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Please note that there is a nonarbitrary relationship between form and meaning of the symbol.

- Ideogram

The earliest-known pictographic writing came from Sumeria, from where it spread to surrounding areas about five thousand years ago. The inadequacy of such a system became obvious when it was necessary to portray abstract notions such as courage, love, hatred, and willingness, or to indicate grammatical categories such as person and number. Making pictograms was also laborious, and the results could be ambiguous.

The users of early pictograms dealt with the problem of representing more abstract notions by extending the use of a particular pictogram to include abstract concepts felt to be associated with it. A pictogram of the sun could also mean light or heat or even energy; an arrow, to run; and a foot, to go. Pictograms that represent ideas rather than concrete objects are called ideograms.

Ideograms represented an important step toward a true writing system, which involves the use of arbitrary symbols to represent linguistic units. The shape of the symbol and the meaning it represented were no longer directly linked. Users of the signs had to associate them with linguistic forms, and not directly with meaning.

eg. Sumerian ideograms

\[ \text{‘to go’} \]

\[ \text{‘star, god’} \]

\[ \text{‘to run’} \]

\[ \text{‘waxing moon, horn, to grow’} \]

A contemporary and very sophisticated development of both pictographic and ideographic writing, Blissymbols (originally called semantography) was developed by Charles K. Bliss. It makes use of a number of recombinalbe symbols that represent basic units of meaning.
• Logogram

We cannot say with certainty at what date pictures began to be read as words, but there can be little doubt that by the time they were no longer recognizable as pictures, they were truly logographic or word writing.

It has been suggested that the idea of writing had its origin in small clay tokens and counters that were used in record keeping and business transactions in the ancient Middle East. These small, fire-baked pieces of clay were apparently used for this purpose for thousands of years before writing emerged. Counters representing cattle and other goods were stored on shelves or in baskets. Eventually, people began to make an impression of the tokens on soft clay tablets rather than storing and shaping the tokens themselves. This may have led to the idea that other objects and events in the world could be represented symbolically.

Logographic writing represents the oldest kind of genuine writing system. Ancient Mesopotamia cuneiform inscriptions, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and primordial Chinese characters were all logographic systems in their early stages. In fact, all writing systems maintain some logographic writing. Conventional abbreviations such as & , %, $, and the like are logographic, as are the symbols for numerals. Logographic writing can be ‘read’ independently of its language origin. For example, the Arabic numbers 1, 2, 7, 10 and so on can be read in any language, and the symbol for ‘house’  can be read as ‘maison’ in French or ‘casa’ in Italian. This can be an advantage in certain cultures. Chinese speakers of diverse linguistic backgrounds can read the same books and newspapers even though their dialects are mutually unintelligible, since even today Chinese writing is highly logographic. The character ‘火’ means ‘fire’ whether it is pronounced as [wo] in Peking or [fa] in Canton. A major disadvantage of logographic writing lies in the fact that extensive memorization is needed to use it; one must learn several thousand Chinese characters to read even a newspaper.
Syllabary

Syllabic writing is when symbols represent syllables rather than words. Syllabic writing is more efficient than logographic writing, since a relatively small number of signs are needed to represent the possible sound combinations of a language. Modern Japanese is written with two syllabaries. These systems, known as katakana and hiragana, were developed by using modified Chinese signs for their approximate phonetic values.

Look at the example discussed on pages 373-374 of F & R. You will be able to understand about syllabic writing if you read those pages.

Alphabet

Alphabetic scripts are used to write English, French, Russian, Vietnamese, German, Bahasa Malaysia, Turkish and many other languages. These systems typically require fewer signs than syllabic writing since most languages have fewer phonemes than they have syllable types.

The first alphabet was developed during the second millennium B.C. when the Semites of ancient Phoenicia (modern Lebanon) devised a writing system of twenty-two consonantal signs, some of which may have developed from Egyptian hieroglyphics. This was the most successful of the various efforts of Semitic peoples to create a writing system, and was ultimately to lead to the development of many alphabetic writing systems, including both the Greek and Latin alphabets. Vowels were not written b the Phoenicians but had to be supplied by the reader, as would be in sentences such as wh r th vth? Wh ls thm?

Read about the phonemic principle on page 375 of F & R.

The phoenicians were a trading people who carried their products abroad by land and sea. Their use of writing spread to adjacent countries and beyond along with their commercial enterprises. Greece was one of the first recipients of this new method of writing. The first true alphabet arose in the process of adapting the Phoenician system for the representation of the Greek language.
It would be a good idea for you to read about 'spelling' on pp. 379-385 of F & R. These pages will show you the development of English spelling.

Non-European Writing Systems

While writing systems that originated in the ancient Middle East have spread all over the world, other writing systems have emerged as well.

For example:
- Chinese writing
- Korean writing
- Indian scripts

From reading the notes above, we can deduce that the development of writing is one of humanity's greatest intellectual achievements. For pictograms, ideograms, and logograms, the graphic representation of language has developed through syllabic writing to the alphabet.

Further Reading

(i) To read older accounts of the development of writing, refer to

(ii) A historical survey of the archeological discoveries relevant to the study of writing is found in
Introduction to General Linguistics  
Study Guide  
Writing Systems

Questions

Attempt to answer all questions below to check whether you have understood your prescribed reading and notes provided in this study guide.

1. Describe the major differences between writing and speech.

2. Writing must be taught, whereas spoken language is acquired automatically. Explain.

3. Discuss the advantages of a syllabary over pictographs and logographs.

4. What makes an alphabet different from the syllabic writing systems?

5. ‘Write’ the following words and phrases, using pictograms that you invent.

   a. eye
   b. a boy
   c. two boys
   d. library
   e. tree
   f. forest
   g. war
   h. honesty
   i. ugly
   j. run
   k. smoke
Answers

1. | Spoken                        | Written                        |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than one participant</td>
<td>Single writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inexplicit</td>
<td>Explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetitive</td>
<td>Non-repetitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragments</td>
<td>Full sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple structure</td>
<td>Elaborate structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete, common vocabulary</td>
<td>Abstract, less common vocabulary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. All children naturally learn to speak the language of the community in which they are brought up. They acquire the basics of their native language before they enter school, or even if they never attend school. Writing systems vary in complexity, but regardless of their level of sophistication, they all must be taught.

3. A syllabic writing system requires far fewer symbols than a logographic writing system. It is more economical in the sense that it requires far less memorization and learning time.

4. An alphabetic system employs a character or combination of characters to represent each speech sound used by the language which is written. Each of the syllables which make up the words of a language is, in turn, composed of one or more speech sounds. Since there are just a limited number of speech sounds used by any given language, there are fewer unique speech sounds than unique syllables in a language. Therefore, it stands to reason that an alphabetic writing system requires even fewer characters than a syllabic writing system.

5. I do not provide any answers for this question. Your answers should be interesting enough.