

Linguistics 1

An Introduction

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What is Linguistics?

- Language is a system that associates sounds (or gestures) with meanings in a way that uses words and sentences.
- Linguistics is the systematic study of the structure and evolution of human language, and it is applicable to every aspect of human endeavor.
- Linguistics as a science began at the beginning of the 19th century and was diachronic in its orientation.
- The main goal of linguistics, like all other intellectual disciplines, is to increase our knowledge and understanding of the world. Since language is universal and fundamental to all human interactions, the knowledge attained in linguistics has many practical applications.
- Apart from simply understanding the complexities of world languages, linguistic knowledge can be applied to improving communication between people, contributing to translation activities, assisting in literacy efforts, and treating speech disorders.
- Linguistics overlaps and (ideally) cooperates with: psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, logic, mathematics, computer science, speech pathology, acoustics, music, etc

Development of Linguistics

- The history of linguistics is bound up with various theories which have been proposed in the attempt at explaining the nature of the human language faculty.
- **Non-theoretical studies**—before the 19th century
- **Historical linguistics** (Neogrammarianism)—19th century
 - One of their main concerns was the reconstruction of the proto-language Indo-European from which nearly all languages in Europe and many in the Middle East and northern India are derived.
- **Structuralism** (de Saussure)—first half of 20th century
 - Saussure stressed the interaction at any one time of elements in a language's structure and maintained that these were interrelated in a network of relations.
 - The focus on language system and structure led to a functional view of language.
- **Generative grammar** (Chomsky)—second half of 20th century
 - The generative approach to language change sees it primarily as rule change which becomes part of the internalised grammar of a certain generation and remains so until replaced by another rule change.

Animal Communication vs. Human Language

- Charles F. Hockett (1916-2000) distinguished language from communication. While almost all animals communicate in some way, a communication system is only considered language if it possesses all of the characteristics given below.
- Design features of HL (1960s)
 - **Duality of Structure:** HL is constructed at two levels—words and sounds
 - **Arbitrariness:** There is no natural relationship between signs or symbols and their encoded meanings.
 - **Creativity:** HL is an open-ended system and new structures and meanings are possible
 - **Productivity:** Infinite combinations of finite structures possible.
 - **Displacement:** HL can communicate messages displaced in time and space.
 - **Cultural transmission:** HL is not genetically inherited, but culturally transmitted.
 - **Interchangeability:** Any human being can be the sender or receiver of messages.
 - **Dynamic and Modifiable:** HL changes over time.
 - **Specialization:** The sign produced is specialised for communication and is not the side effect of some other behaviour.
 - **Prevarication (Lying):** HL enables users to fabricate facts.

Origins of Language

- **Bow-wow Theory**—language originated in the imitations of the cries of animals and birds
- **Pooh-pooh Theory**—language originated as a response to emotions triggered by pain and pleasure
- **Ding-dong Theory**—earliest words were an onomatopoeic echo of sounds around people
- **Yo-he-ho Theory**—language emerged from rhymes sounds made during collective work
- **Ta-ta Theory**: speech came from the use of tongue and mouth gestures to mimic manual gestures

Historical Linguistics

- Historical linguistics studies language change
 - **Diachronically** (through a comparison of different time periods in the past and present) or
 - In a **synchronic** manner (by observing developments between different variations that exist within the current linguistic stage of a language).
- At first, historical linguistics focussed **comparative linguistics**, which involves a study of **language families** and the **relationship between different languages**.
- Comparative Linguistics is associated with Sir William Jones and Jacob Grimm

Language Families

- In 1786, William Jones made an amazing discovery: There are regular sound correspondences among many of the languages spoken in Europe, India, and Persia.
- For example, the English 'f' sound often corresponds to a 'p' sound in, among others, Latin and Sanskrit, an important ancient language of India:

ENGLISH LATIN SANSKRIT

father pater pita

- Scholars realized that these correspondences—found in thousands of words—could not be due to chance or to mutual influence. The only reliable conclusion was that these languages are related to one another because they come from a common ancestor.
- Groups of languages evolving from a common ancestor language are classified into language families.
- The language that acts as the common ancestor is called the proto-language.
- This type of classifying is known as genealogical classification.

Language Families

- Atlantic–Congo (1,403 languages)
- Austronesian (1,274 languages)
- **Indo-European (583 languages)**
- Sino-Tibetan (497 languages)
- Afro-Asiatic (377 languages)
- Nuclear Trans–New Guinea (317 languages)
- Pama–Nyungan (250 languages)
- Oto-Manguean (181 languages)
- Austroasiatic (157 languages)
- Tai–Kadai (95 languages)
- Dravidian (79 languages)
- Arawakan (77 languages)
- Mande (75 languages)
- Tupian (71 languages)

Indo-European Family

- The largest language family, with the highest number of speakers
- Proto-Indo-European (PIE) is the proto language
- Sir William Jones identified genetic similarities between Sanskrit, Latin and Greek
- It comprises most of the languages of Europe together with those of the northern Indian subcontinent and the Iranian Plateau.
- Some European languages of this family, such as English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Danish, Dutch, and Spanish, have expanded through colonialism in the modern period and are now spoken across several continents.
- The Indo-European family is divided into several branches or sub-families, of which there are eight groups with languages still alive today: Albanian, Armenian, Balto-Slavic, Celtic, Germanic, Hellenic, Indo-Iranian, and Italic

History of English: Major Developments

Old English Phonological Changes

- **Ablaut (Vowel Gradation)**

- The word Ablaut was used by earlier German grammarians in a negative sense
- It refers to the deviation of the "irregular" strong verbs from "regular" weak verbs (sing—sang—sung or give—gave—given)
- Ablaut is the oldest and most extensive single source of vowel gradation in the Indo-European languages and must be distinguished clearly from other forms of gradation, which developed later, such as Germanic umlaut (man / men, goose / geese, long / length)

- **Umlaut (i-mutation or front mutation)**

- A sound change early in the development of Old English by which a back vowel changes to the associated front vowel (fronting) or a front vowel becomes closer to /i/ (raising) when the following syllable contains /i/, /i:/, or /j/.

Norman Conquest 1066

- The Normans spoke Norman French, an early version of the French language
- This became the language of the ruling and upper classes during the Middle Ages.
- This language division separated the people of Britain, because the working people and the peasants still spoke English, which was considered inferior at the time
- During this period many French words entered the lexicon of English, such as chivalry and croissant.

The Great Vowel Shift

- Occurred near the end of the Middle English period in language
- A series of sound changes affecting the long vowels of English during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries.
- /i:/ ---> /ai/
- /e:/ ---> /i:/
- /æ:/ ---> /e:/ (later --> /i:/)
- /a:/ ---> /e:/
- /u:/ ---> /au/
- /o:/ ---> /u:/
- "au" ---> /o:/

Printing Press

- In 1476, William Caxton set up the first printing press in England.
 - Higher rate of literacy
 - Standardization of spelling

Modern Linguistics: Beginnings

- At the beginning of the 20th century, attention shifted to the fact that not only language change, but language structure as well, is systematic and governed by regular rules and principles.
- The attention of the world's linguists turned more and more to the study of grammar—in the technical sense of the term the organization of the sound system of a language and the internal structure of its words and sentences.
- By the 1920s, the program of 'structural linguistics', inspired in large part by the ideas of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, was developing sophisticated methods of grammatical analysis.
- Structural Linguistics is associated with Saussure, Bloomfield, Hockett and Jakobson

Types of Languages

- **Analytic**—a language that organizes words and grammar by a strict word order instead of inflections, or word endings that show grammar. E.g. English
- **Synthetic**—any language in which syntactic relations within sentences are expressed by inflection (the change in the form of a word that indicates distinctions of tense, person, gender, number, mood, voice, and case). E.g. Sanskrit
- **Agglutinative**—a form of synthetic language in which each affix typically represents one unit of meaning (such as "diminutive," "past tense," "plural," etc.), and bound morphemes are expressed by affixes (and not by internal changes of the root of the word, or changes in stress or tone). E.g. Korean

Language Variations

- **Argot**—An argot is a language primarily developed to disguise conversation, originally because of a criminal enterprise, though the term is also used loosely to refer to informal jargon.
- **Cant**—Cant is somewhat synonymous with argot and jargon and refers to the vocabulary of an in-group that uses it to deceive or exclude nonusers.
- **Colloquial Language**—Anything not employed in formal writing or conversation, including terms that might fall under one or more of most of the other categories in this list, is a colloquialism. Colloquial and colloquialism may be perceived to be pejorative terms, but they merely refer to informal terminology.
- **Creole**—A creole is a more sophisticated development of a pidgin, derived from two or more parent languages and used by people all ages as a native language.

- **Dialect**—A dialect is a way of speaking based on geographical or social factors.
- **Jargon**—Jargon is a body of words and phrases that apply to a specific activity or profession, such as a particular art form or athletic or recreational endeavor, or a medical or scientific subject. Jargon is often necessary for precision when referring to procedures and materials integral to a certain pursuit.
- **Lingo**—This term vaguely refers to the speech of a particular community or group and is therefore loosely synonymous with many of the other words in this list.
- **Lingua Franca**—A lingua franca is a language often adopted as a common tongue to enable communication between speakers of separate languages, though pidgins and creoles, both admixtures of two or more languages, are also considered lingua francas.
- **Patois**—Patois refers loosely to a nonstandard language such as a creole, a dialect, or a pidgin, with a connotation of the speakers' social inferiority to those who speak the standard language.

- **Pidgin**—A simplified language arising from the efforts of people speaking different languages to communicate is a pidgin. These languages generally develop to facilitate trade between people without a common language. In time, pidgins often evolve into creoles.
- **Slang**—A vocabulary of terms (at least initially) employed in a specific subculture is slang. Slang terms, either invented words or those whose meanings are adapted to new senses, develop out of a subculture's desire to disguise — or exclude others from — their conversations. As US society becomes more youth oriented and more homogenous, slang becomes more widespread in usage, and subcultures continually invent new slang as older terms are appropriated by the mainstream population.
- **Vernacular**—A vernacular is a native language or dialect, as opposed to another tongue also in use, such as Spanish, French, or Italian and their dialects as compared to their mother language, Latin. Alternatively, a vernacular is a dialect itself as compared to a standard language (though it should be remembered that a standard language is simply a dialect or combination of dialects that has come to predominate).

Language Styles

- Language style is classified into five types based on the degree of formality
 - Frozen— Frozen style or oratorical style, is the most formal style
 - Formal
 - Consultative
 - Casual
 - Intimate style

Speech vs. Writing

- Traditionally, writing was considered primary, and speech secondary
- Saussure inverted it—speech is more important than writing
- Today they are considered equal

Fallacies of Traditional Grammar

- The structuralists were the ones who reacted against the approach in traditional school of grammars. The failings or fallacies of traditional as enumerated by them are the following
- **The Latinate Fallacy:** The traditional grammarians of English borrowed Latin grammar as the model for describing English or any other language. As a result, the grammar of English was written without any in-depth study of the linguistic facts of English.
- **The Semantic Fallacy:** The traditional grammarians used meaning in the definition or description of grammatical categories. This use of meaning as a tool or criterion in linguistic description makes grammar unscientific because meaning itself cannot be scientifically captured.

Fallacies of Traditional Grammar

- **The Logical Fallacy:** The traditional linguists held that the rules of grammar should be governed by the laws of logic. This belief was inherited from the speculative grammarians of the Middle Ages who thought that human language mirrored the universe which itself was governed by logic.
- **The Fallacy of Lack of Explicitness:** Many definitions and descriptions in traditional grammar are not explicit, which means they are not clearly, precisely and unambiguously stated.
- **The Fallacy of Mixing Up Different Criteria:** The traditionalists mixed up different criteria in their description of grammatical items and structures.

Fallacies of Traditional Grammar

- **The Written Form Fallacy:** The traditional linguists used the written form of language as their data, and therefore their description of a language was the description of the written form of a language. The spoken form was completely ignored.
- **The Prescriptive Fallacy:** The traditionalists focussed only on the norms of language use for the native speaker.
- **The Fallacy of Ignoring Language Variations:** The traditionalists considered language monolithic and ignored different varieties of the same language.

Linguistics is a Science

- **Empirical**—based on observation, not theory
- **Rational**—based on reason, not emotion
- **Objective**—avoids prejudices and subjectivity
- **Verification principle**—statement becomes valid only on verification
- **Reductionist**—reduces complex elements into easy components not facilitate better understanding
- **Holistic**—all-encompassing
- **Deductive**—a general rule can be applied to examples

Two Approaches in Linguistics

- **Macrolinguistics** focuses on language more broadly by looking at how language impacts societies and vice versa
- **Microlinguistics** looks at the smaller details of language, such as syntax, phonetics, grammar, and phonology.

Branches of (Micro) Linguistics

- **Phonetics**
 - Study of sounds in a speech in physical terms
- **Phonology**
 - Sounds in a speech in cognitive terms
- **Morphology**
 - Study of words, how they are formed, and their relationship to other words in the same language
- **Syntax**
 - Study of formation and structure of sentences
- **Semantics**
 - Study of meanings
- **Pragmatics**
 - Study of how context contributes to meaning

Branches of Macro Linguistics

- **Sociolinguistics**—the study of language in relation to social factors, including differences of regional, class, and occupational dialect, gender differences, and bilingualism.
- **Psycholinguistics**—the study of the relationships between linguistic behaviour and psychological processes, including the process of language acquisition.
- **Neurolinguistics**—the branch of linguistics dealing with the relationship between language and the structure and functioning of the brain.
- **Discourse analysis**—a method of analysing the structure of texts or utterances longer than one sentence, taking into account both their linguistic content and their sociolinguistic context; analysis performed using this method.
- **Cognitive linguistics**—the study of language in its cognitive function, where cognitive refers to the crucial role of intermediate informational structures in our encounters with the world.
- **Applied linguistics**—Study of real-life applications of Linguistics

Applied Linguistics

- Aims
 - To improve the ways in which a student's native language is taught
 - To help people learn foreign language more efficiently
 - To write better dictionaries
 - To improve therapy for people with language problems
 - To search the Internet more efficiently and successfully

Domains of Applied Linguistics

- Bilingualism, Multilingualism
- Contrastive Linguistics, Forensic Linguistics
- Sign Linguistics
- Discourse Analysis
- Language Education & Second Language Acquisition
- Interlinguistics
- Stylistics
- Pragmatics
- Translation

Grammar

- **Grammar**—the whole system and structure of a language or of languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes also phonology and semantics.
- **Descriptive Grammar**
 - Linguists attempt to describe the grammar of the language that exists in the minds of its speakers, i.e. to create a model of speakers' mental grammar.
 - The resulting descriptive grammar describes person's basic linguistic knowledge. It explains how it is possible to speak and understand and it summarizes what speakers know about the sounds, words, phrases and sentences of their language.
- **Prescriptive Grammar**
 - People who engage in Prescriptive grammar make up the rules of the grammar.
 - They attempt to impose the rules for speaking and writing on people without much regard for what the majority of educated speakers of a language actually say and write.