

Day 2: Introduction

L303/L503: Intro to Linguistic Analysis

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- 1 *Linguistics*
 - Objectivity
 - Linguistic Competence
 - Subfields

- 2 *What is language?*
 - 'Big 5' facts
 - Design Features
 - Modality

Linguistics

What is it?

Linguistics is...

Linguistics

What is it?

Linguistics is...

- “The scientific study and analysis of human language.”
- But what does this mean?

Objectivity

We all

Objectivity

We all

- know a language (or more than one)
- have opinions about language
- hear and promulgate myths about language
- know rules about language/grammar
 - consciously: **prescriptive rules**
 - subconsciously: **descriptive rules**

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But do we think about language objectively?

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive grammar

Linguistics is

- thinking about language objectively
- **not** the study of how to speak properly

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive grammar

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Two types of “grammar”:

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive grammar

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- Descriptive grammar
 - **describes** the rules that govern what people do or can say
 - natural, followed intuitively, need not be taught
- Prescriptive grammar

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive grammar

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Two types of “grammar”:

- Descriptive grammar
 - **describes** the rules that govern what people do or can say
 - natural, followed intuitively, need not be taught
- Prescriptive grammar
 - **prescribes** rules governing what people should/shouldn't say
 - not natural, must be learned by rote (in school)

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive grammar

Examples

Example rules

- Prescriptive:

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive grammar

Examples

Example rules

- Prescriptive:
 - Don't end sentences with a preposition
 - Don't split infinitives
 - Don't use double negatives
- Descriptive:

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive grammar

Examples

Example rules

- Prescriptive:
 - Don't end sentences with a preposition
 - Don't split infinitives
 - Don't use double negatives
- Descriptive:
 - The sequence of sounds [rt] can come at the end of a word in English, but not at the beginning (e.g., art, *rta).
 - In English, adjectives precede the nouns they modify. e.g.:
 - 1 That is a big, red balloon.
 - 2 * That is a balloon big, red.

Linguistic Competence

Knowing a language

- Linguistic competence

Linguistic Competence

Knowing a language

- Linguistic competence
 - What a speaker of a language knows about the language
 - Is subconscious
 - What linguists want to learn about each language
- What does it mean to know a language?

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 - How to speak so as to be understood by another speaker of the language
 - Understand rules that govern sounds, words, sentences in your language (what is possible vs. impossible)
- How do we know out what this constitutes?

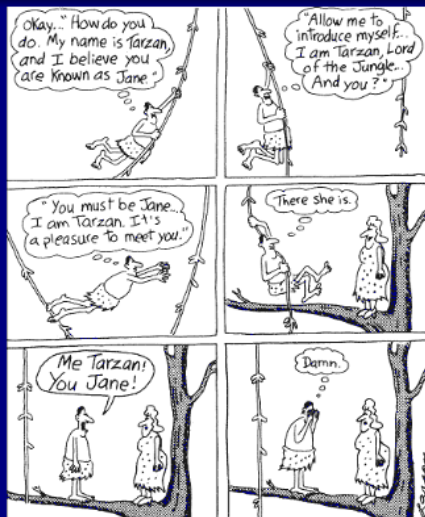
Linguistic Competence

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 - How to speak so as to be understood by another speaker of the language
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- How do we know what this constitutes? Not that easy...

Linguistic Competence

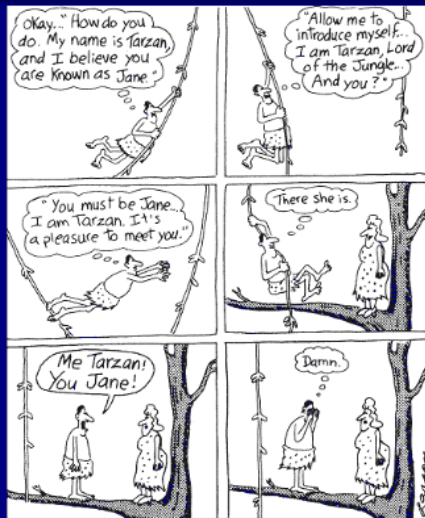
How do we study linguistic competence?



- How do linguists study linguistic competence?

Linguistic Competence

How do we study linguistic competence?



- How do linguists study linguistic competence?
 - observe our **linguistic performance**
 - make and test hypotheses
 - draw conclusions about what our linguistic competence must be like

Linguistic Subfields

Primary subfields of linguistics

- Phonetics
- Phonology
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Semantics
- Pragmatics

Linguistic Subfields

Phonetics and Phonology

- **Phonetics**

Linguistic Subfields

Phonetics and Phonology

- Phonetics
 - the study of the physical properties of **speech sounds** (acoustic phonetics) and how they are made (articulatory phonetics)
 - Example: “Park the car in Harvard Yard.”
 - [p^hɔɹk ðə k^hɔɹ ɪn hɔɹvɹd jɔɹd]
 - [p^hɑ:k də k^hɑ: ɪ hɑ:vɪd jɑ:d]
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- Phonology

- the study of how speech sounds **pattern** and how they are **organized** (i.e., the sound system)
- Example: art, *rta (where ‘*’ = ungrammatical)

Linguistic Subfields

- Morphology

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 - Example: unhappiness → un-happy-ness
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 - the study of **meaning** in language
- Pragmatics
 - the study of how linguistic meaning depends on **context**

Core subfields

Interdisciplinary subfields

Interdisciplinary subfields of linguistics

Core subfields

Interdisciplinary subfields

Interdisciplinary subfields of linguistics

- Sociolinguistics
- Historical linguistics
- Computational linguistics
- Psycholinguistics / Neurolinguistics
- Language and culture

What is language?

Some general properties

'Big 5' facts about language

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 - rules to create sentences/words we've never heard before

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- Grammatical knowledge is subconscious
 - we recognise im/possible sounds, words, sentences, etc
 - we can't always explain why

What is language?

Design Features

What is language?

Design Features

- Charles Hockett (1960)
- Characterize language, distinguish it from other communication systems
- If a system lacks even one feature, it is still communication, but not language

Design Features

Design Features

- Discreteness

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- Discreteness
- Arbitrariness

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- Discreteness
- Arbitrariness
- Cultural transmission

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- Displacement
- Interchangeability
- Productivity

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Definition (Discreteness)

Larger, complex messages can be broken down into smaller, discrete parts

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'pat' →

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Example (Discreteness)

'pat' → [p], [a], [t]

Design Features

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Larger, complex messages can be broken down into smaller, discrete parts

Example (Discreteness)

'pat' → [p], [a], [t] ⇒ 'tap', 'apt'

Design Features

Arbitrariness

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Definition (Arbitrariness)

There is no (necessary) connection between the *form* of signal and its *meaning*

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'whale' is small word for big animal,
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Example (Arbitrariness: counterexample)

iconicity; e.g., onomatopoeia

Design Features

Cultural Transmission

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Definition (Cultural Transmission)

At least some aspect of the communication system is learned from other users

Design Features

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Example (Cultural Transmission)

Any child growing up in a French-speaking environment will learn French

Design Features

Displacement

Displacement

Design Features

Displacement

Displacement

Definition (Displacement)

Ability to talk about things not present in space or time

Design Features

Displacement

Displacement

Definition (Displacement)

Ability to talk about things not present in space or time

Example (Displacement)

A long time ago in a galaxy far,
far away....

Design Features

Interchangeability

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Definition (Interchangeability)

A user can both receive and broadcast the same signal

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Example (Interchangeability)

Any conversation (where people trade roles speaking and listening)

Design Features

Productivity

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Definition (Productivity)

Speakers can create infinite number of novel utterances that others can understand

Design Features

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Definition (Productivity)

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Example (Productivity)

“Little purple gnomes living in my sock drawer said, ‘Elvis lives!’”

Modality

Signed languages

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 - auditory-vocal = aural-oral = spoken languages
 - visual-gestural = signed languages

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Signed languages

- Modality
 - auditory-vocal = aural-oral = spoken languages
 - visual-gestural = signed languages
- Signed languages
 - Not codes for spoken languages
 - Not purely iconic
 - Structurally complex at all levels
 - Meet all design features of language

Modality

Written language

- Written language = secondary to spoken language

Modality

Written language

- Written language = secondary to spoken language
 - Historical development
 - Everyone speaks a language; not all languages are written
 - Learning to speak is automatic; learning to write is not
 - More of the brain is used when writing than speaking
 - Writing can be edited