

# Linguistics

سری کتاب‌های کمک آموزشی کارشناسی ارشد  
و دکتری

مجموعه آموزش زبان انگلیسی

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سرشناسه	Team of Authors :
عنوان	Linguistics :
مشخصات نشر	تهران : مشاوران صعود ماهان، ۱۴۰۴ :
مشخصات ظاهری	۴۱۷ ص :
فروست	سری کتابهای کمک آموزشی کارشناسی ارشد و دکتری :
شابک	۹۷۸-۶۰۰-۳۸۹-۰۳۵-۰ :
وضعیت فهرست نویسی	: فیپای مختصر
یادداشت	: این مدرک در آدرس <a href="http://opac.nlai.ir">http://opac.nlai.ir</a> قابل دسترسی است.
شماره کتابشناسی ملی	۳۷۸۱۸۲۳ :



نام کتاب: ..... Linguistics

مولفان: ..... Team of Authors

ناشر: ..... مشاوران صعود ماهان

نوبت و تاریخ چاپ ..... دهم/ ۱۴۰۴

تیراژ: ..... ۱۰۰۰ جلد

قیمت: ..... ۲۰۰/۰۰۰/۰۰۰ ریال

شابک: ..... ISBN: ۹۷۸-۶۰۰-۳۸۹-۰۳۵-۰

انتشارات مشاوران صعود ماهان: خیابان ولیعصر، بالاتر از تقاطع مطهری،

روبروی قنادی هتل بزرگ تهران، جنب بانک ملی، پلاک ۲۰۵۰

تلفن: ۴-۸۸۱۰۰۱۱۳

# سخن ناشر

## «ن والقلم و ما یسطرون»

کلمه نزد خدا بود و خدا آن را با قلم بر ما نازل کرد.

به پاس تشکر از چنین موهبت الهی، موسسه ماهان درصدد برآمده است تا در راستای انتقال دانش و مفاهیم با کمک اساتید مجرب و مجموعه کتب آموزشی خود برای شما داوطلبان ادامه تحصیل در مقطع کارشناسی ارشد گام موثری بردارد. امید است تلاش‌های خدمتگزاران شما در این موسسه پایه‌گذار گام‌های بلند فردای شما باشد. مجموعه کتاب‌های کمک آموزشی ماهان به منظور استفاده داوطلبان کنکور کارشناسی ارشد سراسری و آزاد تالیف شده‌اند. در این کتاب‌ها سعی کرده‌ایم با بهره‌گیری از تجربه اساتید بزرگ و کتب معتبر داوطلبان را از مطالعه کتاب‌های متعدد در هر درس بی‌نیاز کنیم.

دیگر تالیفات ماهان برای سایر دانشجویان به صورت ذیل می‌باشد.

● **مجموعه کتاب‌های :** شامل چندسال سوالات کنکور سراسری کارشناسی ارشد به همراه با پاسخ تشریحی می‌باشد که برای آشنایی با نمونه سوالات کنکور طراحی شده است. این مجموعه کتاب‌ها اطلاعات مناسبی جهت برنامه‌ریزی درسی در اختیار دانشجو قرار می‌دهد.

بدین وسیله از مجموعه اساتید، مولفان و همکاران محترم خانواده بزرگ ماهان که در تولید و به‌روزرسانی تالیفات ماهان نقش موثری داشته‌اند، صمیمانه تقدیر و تشکر می‌نماییم.

دانشجویان عزیز و اساتید محترم می‌توانند هرگونه انتقاد و پیشنهاد درخصوص تالیفات ماهان را از طریق سایت ماهان به آدرس [mahan.ac.ir](http://mahan.ac.ir) با ما در میان بگذارند.

موسسه آموزش عالی آزاد ماهان

## سخن مؤلف

با توجه به گستردگی مطالب و تنوع درس زبانشناسی، داوطلبان همواره به دنبال منبعی کامل هستند که هم توضیحات کافی در مورد مباحث مهم ارائه کرده باشد و هم مطالب سوالات کنکور سال‌های اخیر را در خود جا داده باشد. هدف از گردآوری این کتاب نیز پاسخ به این نیاز داوطلبان است. مطالب این کتاب براساس محتوای سوالات کنکور ۲۴ سال اخیر و از منابع اصلی گردآوری شده‌اند. مطالعه دقیق این مطالب به همراه تست‌های کنکور سال‌های قبل که به صورت موضوعی در انتهای هر فصل قرار داده شده‌اند به داوطلبان در پاسخگویی به سوالات این درس کمک قابل توجهی می‌کند.

منابع اصلی که در این درس وجود دارند (براساس نام نویسندگان) عبارتند از: Falk, Hudson, Yule, Fromkin. در گردآوری این کتاب گروه مولفان سعی کرده همه مطالب لازم منابع اصلی را با یکدیگر تلفیق کنند که این امر داوطلبان را از مطالعه مطالب تکراری بی‌نیاز می‌کند. حجم مطالب هر فصل متناسب با میزان اهمیت آن فصل در کنکور، بر مبنای تعداد سوالات آن فصل، گردآوری شده است. براین اساس، فصل Semantics بیشترین اهمیت و فصل Origins of language کمترین اهمیت را دارند. با توجه به تغییراتی که از سال ۱۳۹۹ در کنکور ایجاد شده، به داوطلبان توصیه می‌شود کتاب Fromkin و Yule را در برنامه مطالعاتی خود قرار دهند و تمرکز ویژه‌ای بر فصل‌های L1 acquisition, Language in society و Language change داشته باشند.

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# Chapter 1

## *Preliminaries of Linguistics*

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- ◆ Semiotics
- ◆ Linguistic Signs
- ◆ Linguistic Competence vs. Linguistic Performance
- ◆ Sub-structures of Linguistic Competence
- ◆ Grammar

# Preliminaries of Linguistics

## 1. SEMIOTICS

**SEMIOTICS** is the theory and study of *signs*, especially as elements of language or other systems of communication. Humans seem to be driven by a natural force to make meanings. Instinctively, we continually create and interpret signs; therefore, we are always engaged in making meanings. Signs can take different forms like: words, images, sounds, odors, flavors, acts or objects, but such things have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when we invest them with meaning. Anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as ‘signifying’ something – referring to or standing for something.

In other words, a sign is “whatever that signifies or stands for something” and as can be inferred from above it may be understood as an intersection or relationship of form and meaning, where form is something concrete, including writing, sound, and gestures, and meaning is the concept or object that appears in our minds (i.e., something mental or cognitive) when we encounter the form. Saussure offered a dyadic or two-part model of the sign. He defined a sign as being composed of:

- the ‘signifier’ (or signifiant): the form which the sign takes; and
- the ‘signified’ (or signifié): the concept it represents

If we take a linguistic example, the phrase NO SMOKING (when seen by someone) is a sign consisting of:

- a signifier (form): the written words NO SMOKING;
- a signified concept (meaning): that everyone is forbidden to smoke.

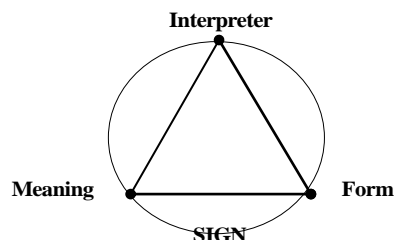
Therefore, the schematic representation of sign would look like:



As illustrated in the examples, a form without a meaning is not sign, nor is a meaning without a form. It may be argued that form and meaning cannot exist apart from one another, and it is not easy to argue otherwise.

Here, we can define communication as ‘the use of signs’ in which one presents the signs to others. Accordingly, we can define a third component for sign which is called *interpreter*. The relationship between the form of a sign and its meaning must be part of the knowledge of its interpreter.

In the course of communication, the speaker may attach a meaning to the form s/he presents while the interpreter or third party may attach another meaning to that form. As a result, interpreter adds an aspect or dimension of variability to our understanding of sign, because different interpreters may recognize different aspects of meaning in association with different forms.



There are three types of signs, which differ according to the three types of relationship that exist between form and meaning:



**Icon:** It is a sign whose form has actual characteristics of its meanings. For example, the sign shown on the left, means man. Its meaning is so obvious because the sign has the actual characteristics of the meaning.



**Index:** It is a sign whose form has characteristics which are only associated in nature with its meaning. For example, skull and crossed bones traditionally mean 'poison'. Let's consider the indexical nature of this signs. When you see this sign on a barrel of gunpowder, you can *infer* that if it explodes, you will die and in a few months you will look like this.



**Symbol:** It is a sign whose form is arbitrarily or conventionally associated with its meaning. For example, the symbol on the left, which is a cuneiform writing symbol, has no relationship with its meaning 'God/ heaven'. In fact, nothing in nature associates this word with this meaning.

## 2. LINGUISTIC SIGNS

In their communication, human beings almost always use simple words such as *cat*, complex words such as *catfish*, or sub-word types like *im-*. From previous explanation you should have realized by now that with rare exceptions, the typical signs of human language are symbolic.

### 2.1. Evidence for the Symbolic Nature of Linguistic Signs

There are three sorts of clear evidence that linguistic signs are typically symbolic:

- **Translation equivalents:** These are words with approximately the same meanings in different languages. If words were typically iconic or indexical, then equivalents from language to language would be similar in form as well as meaning. The word meaning *dog*, for example, should sound (or look) the same in different languages. But in English, a dog is called *dog*, in French *chien*, in Spanish *perro*, and in Arabic *kalb*. This is typical for translation equivalents: the words do not sound (or look) similar at all.
- **Synonyms:** These are words with the same or similar meanings within a language. If words were typically iconic or indexical, words with the similar meaning within a language should have similar forms; and such equivalents such as *car* and *automobile* would not exist.

- **Iconically expressible meanings:** Consider meanings that, theoretically, could be readily expressed as pronunciations. An example would be numbers, such as *one*, *two*, etc. We could somehow express their meaning by lengthening *two* twice as long as *one* and lengthening *ten* ten times as long as *one*. However, their written form does not reflect this. That is, the written form *ten* is not ten times as big as *one*.

## 2.2. Exceptions to the Symbolic Nature of Linguistic Signs

The following represent exceptions to the symbolic nature of language:

- **Sound symbolism:** It refers to words whose pronunciation suggests the meaning.
  - There are some words which are iconic signs, termed *mimetic words*. **MIMETIC** (or **ONOMATOPOEIC**) **WORDS** sound like what they mean, for example, *bow-wow*, *tick-tock*, and *bam*. The phonetic forms of such words have actual characteristics of their meanings, which are sounds; mimetic words sound something like the sounds they mean. But even here the sounds differ from language to language, reflecting the particular sound system of the language. In English *cock-a-doodle-doo* is an onomatopoeic word whose meaning is ‘the crow of a rooster’, whereas in Finnish the rooster’s crow is *kukkokiekuu*.
  - Another case of iconicity in morphemes is drawing out the pronunciation of word *long* so that the form of the word, like the meaning, is long: *loooooong*.
  - Still, a third case is when particular sound sequences seem to relate to a particular concept. In English many words beginning with *gl* relate to ‘sight’, such as *glare*, *glint*, *gleam*, *glisten*, *glossy*, *glance*, *glimmer*, *glimpse* and *glisten*.
- Here is an example of indexicality. Suppose you wanted to get someone’s attention. You might say *Hey!* for the first time. If he does not get it you would try louder *HEY!* Yet if he does not notice you would be louder than before *HEY!* This is an example of indexicality; the schematic representation of this situation is like:



The form ‘increasing loudness’ naturally does not have the meaning of ‘attracting attention’; that is, loudness is not an actual characteristic of getting attention. Thus, this is an example of indexicality in language.

## 3. LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE vs. LINGUISTIC PERFORMANCE

Language and speech are not synonyms. **SPEECH** is a concrete, physical act – the production of specific utterances containing particular words arranged in particular ways and expressed by means of certain sounds. **LANGUAGE** is a mental phenomenon, a body of knowledge about sounds, meanings and syntax which resides in the mind. This knowledge can be put to use but the speech or writing that results is merely a representation of the language.

The knowledge of language is rarely conscious; that is, speakers of a language are not aware of what they know. Furthermore, our use of this unconscious knowledge is often subject to

error. We all occasionally make slips of the tongue, fail to complete a sentence we started to say, etc. Thus, someone may say *I took the hook home* rather than *I took the book home*.

The knowledge of language is not, therefore, always accurately reflected by the use of language. Because of this, Chomsky (1965) found it useful to distinguish between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. **LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE** is the unconscious knowledge of a language about sounds, meanings, and syntax possessed by the speakers. The linguistic system is acquired with no conscious awareness. Just as we may not be conscious of the principles that allow us to stand or walk, we are unaware of the rules of language. **LINGUISTIC PERFORMANCE** is the actual use of linguistic competence in the production and comprehension of language.

The linguist's domain of study is language itself. Various errors in language performance often are caused by factors that have nothing to do with our knowledge of language such as a person's health, emotional state, memory and attention span, the topic, etc. The linguist, therefore, must sort out linguistic competence from all of the other factors involved in performance. Only in this way can we arrive at some understanding of the linguistic system that constitutes a human language.

Since linguistic competence is a mental reality, not a physical one, the isolation of competence from performance is a difficult task. Only performance is directly observable. Linguists have two ways to determine linguistic competence. First, they can investigate language by noting instances of actual language behavior. Linguists observe the sentences produced by speakers as well as those comprehended by listeners and attempt to determine the kinds of linguistic knowledge that people must have to use language as they do. Second, speakers of language can make judgments about sentences; they can tell when a sentence is ambiguous, or when it is ungrammatical. To make such judgments requires an underlying knowledge of the language, and thus speakers' judgments about sentences provide the linguists with further insight into speakers' knowledge of the rules of language.

#### 4. THREE SUB-STRUCTURES OF LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

What constitutes our unconscious knowledge of language? According to Chomsky, speakers of a language have at least three types of knowledge as components of their linguistic competence, i.e., knowledge of sounds, knowledge of words and knowledge of sentence from non-sentence.

##### 4.1. Knowledge of the Sound System

This type of knowledge consists of phonetics and phonology. **PHONETICS** is knowing what sounds are in a language and what sounds are not, and how these sounds are produced. One way this unconscious knowledge is revealed is by the way speakers of one language pronounce words from another language. French people speaking English often pronounce words like *this* and *that* as if they were spelled *zis* and *zat*.

Besides knowing the list of inventory of sounds, we know which sounds may start a word, end a word, and follow each other; this is phonology. **PHONOLOGY** is concerned with the sound system of a language; the component of linguistic competence that includes the inventory of sounds (phonemic units) and the processes required to ensure their appropriate combination/pattern and realization, including aspects of rhythm, intonation and stress. For

example, English speakers pronounce the name *Nkrumah* either as *Nekrumah* or *Enkrumah* because no word in English begins with the *nk* sound.

#### 4.2. Knowledge of Words

Knowledge of the sound system of the language is only one part of linguistic knowledge that speakers of a language have. Native speakers of a language also know that certain strings of sounds stand for certain concepts or **meanings**. Speakers of English know what *boy* means, and that it is different from *girl*. When you know a language, you know words in that language; that is, you know which sequences of sounds relate to specific meanings and which do not. At the same time, speakers of a language know the smallest meaningful units of language, their different forms, the internal structure of words, and the processes and rules by which words are formed. This knowledge is called **MORPHOLOGY**. Morphological rules express the possible combination of these small meaningful units into words, e.g., how to combine *-er*, *learn*, *-s*, yielding *learners*.

#### 4.3. Knowledge of Sentence and Non-sentence

To memorize and store an infinite set of sentences would require an infinite storage capacity. However, the brain is finite, and even if it were not, we could not store novel sentences. When you learn a language, you must learn something finite and that can be stored. If putting one word after another in any order always formed sentences, then language could simply be a set of words. However, words are not enough and that is why we reject the following as unacceptable:

- \*What are drinking and go home?<sup>1</sup>
- \*Lost Fatima security blanket his.
- \*What he thought was want a sports car.

Therefore, in addition to knowing the words of the language, linguistic knowledge includes rules for forming sentences, called knowledge of syntax, i.e., the ability to distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical ones. **SYNTAX** concerns the rules of sentence formation; the component of linguistic competence that represents speakers' knowledge of the structure of phrases and sentences. Every language has words, which combine as phrases and sentences. The possibilities of combination are strictly limited, so every language has syntax or sentence structure. *Syntactic rules* specify the possible combinations of words as phrases and as sentences of general types, such as affirmative, statements, etc.

### 5. GRAMMAR

The word grammar has two usages. In one sense, grammar refers to the **MENTAL GRAMMAR** speakers have in their brain, i.e., it refers to the knowledge speakers have about the units and rules of their language—rules for combining sounds into words (called **PHONOLOGY**), rules of word formation (called **MORPHOLOGY**), rules for combining words into phrases and phrases into sentences (called **SYNTAX**), as well as the rules for assigning meaning (called **SEMANTICS**). The grammar, together with a mental dictionary (called **LEXICON**) that lists the words of the language, represents our linguistic competence.

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<sup>1</sup> The symbol \* means that the sentence is syntactically or semantically unacceptable.

In another sense it refers to the systematic, formal, explicit description of this linguistic knowledge (or internalized grammar). When we say that a sentence is grammatical, we mean that it conforms to the rules of the mental grammar (as described by the linguistic); when we say that it is ungrammatical, we mean it deviates from the rules in some way.

### 5.1. Descriptive vs. Prescriptive Approach

Every human being who speaks a language knows its grammar. When linguists wish to describe a language, they attempt to describe the rules (the grammar) of the language that exist in the minds of its speakers. To the extent that the linguist's description is a true model of the speakers' linguistic capacity, it is a successful description of the grammar and of the language itself. Such a model is called a **DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR**. It does not tell you how you *should* speak; it describes your basic linguistic knowledge. It explains how it is possible for you to speak and understand and make judgements about well-formedness, and it is a description of the underlying, mental linguistic competence of its speakers. The rules in such a grammar are constitutive—they describe what the language is.

Language 'purists' of all ages believe that some versions of a language are better than others, that there are certain 'correct' forms that all educated people should use in speaking and writing, and that language change is corruption. The Greek Alexandrians in the first century, the Arabic scholars at Basra in the eighth century and numerous English grammarians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries held this view. They wished to prescribe rather than describe the rules of grammar, which gave rise to the writing of **PRESCRIPTIVE GRAMMARS**. Rules of such grammar are regulative/legislative—rules of what the language should be rather than what they are.

In the Renaissance a new middle class emerged who wanted their children to speak the dialect of the "upper" classes. This desire led to the publication of many prescriptive grammars. In 1762, Bishop Robert Lowth wrote a grammar book in which he prescribed a number of new rules for English, many of them influenced by his personal taste. Some familiar examples of prescriptive rules for English sentences are:

- You must not split an infinitive.
- You must not end a sentence with a preposition.
- You must not use double negation.
- You must use *were* with *you*, though it is singular.

Following these types of rules, traditional teachers would correct sentences like *Who did you go with?* to *With whom did you go?*

Many of these prescriptive rules were based on Latin grammar and made little sense for English. Because Lowth was influential and because the rising new class wanted to speak "properly," many of these new rules were legislated into English grammar, at least for the *prestige dialect*—that variety of the language spoken by people in positions of power. Although all human languages and dialects are fully expressive, complete, and logical, whether spoken by rich or poor, powerful or weak, learned or illiterate, it is undeniable that the *standard dialect* may indeed be a better dialect for someone wishing to obtain a particular job or achieve a position of social prestige. In a society where "linguistic profiling" is used to discriminate against speakers of a minority



dialect, it may behoove those speakers to learn the prestige dialect rather than wait for social change. But linguistically, prestige and standard dialects do not have superior grammars.

## 5.2. Traditional Grammar

The term **TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR** is often used with clear pejorative connotations, reflecting the sometimes inadequate nature of traditional descriptions (like scholastic and rationalist philosophers) and the overtly prescriptive orientation of earlier grammars based on Latin and Greek (like Alexandrians, Romans, and 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century grammarians). Since there were well-established grammatical descriptions of Greek and Latin, it seemed appropriate to adopt the existing categories from these descriptions and apply them in the analysis of newer languages such as English. The best-known terms from that tradition are those used in describing the **parts of speech**. Parts of speech include *nouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, articles, and adjectives*.

In addition to the terms used for the parts of speech, traditional grammatical analysis has also given us a number of other categories, including *number, person, tense, voice* and *gender*. The role of these categories in describing language structure becomes clearer when we consider them in terms of **agreement**. For example, we say that the verb *loves* agrees with the noun *Fatima* in the sentence *Fatima loves her dog*. This agreement is partially based on:

the category of number, that is, whether the noun is singular or plural;

the category of person, which covers the distinctions of first person, second person and third person;

the concept of tense of the verb is present which is different from the past tense.

The sentence is also in the active voice, describing what ‘Fatima’ does. The final category is gender, which helps us describe the agreement between ‘Fatima’ and ‘her’ in the example.

## 5.3. Structural Grammar

American linguists who were involved in the study of American-Indian languages found out that the historical orientation of 19<sup>th</sup> century European linguistics was not very practical for languages that lacked written materials from the past. Before long, linguists once again concentrated on studying the form of languages, emphasizing descriptions, rather than the history of these languages. It was in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the **STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS** school emerged. The father of modern structural linguistics was *Ferdinand de Saussure*, who believed in language as a systematic structure serving as a link between thought and sound.

American linguists frequently approached American-Indian languages without the advantage of knowing even the basic sound system, let alone the principles of sentence formation or meaning. Thus, they had to start their studies with what was immediately observable in language - the sounds. Because of their attention to form/structure, American linguists were called structuralists. They were characterized by an intensive investigation of sounds and principles of word formation, and little attention was paid to syntax or meaning. Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Bloomfield are some of these famous American structuralists. In their work, they gradually evolved a set of procedures considered useful in determining the sound system of languages. Later, known as *discovery procedures*, these techniques of linguistic analysis were eventually extended from the sound system to the principles of word formation in various languages. However, the discovery procedure did not work in the investigation of syntax. The study of sentence formation



required more sophisticated techniques of investigation and analysis. Two such techniques used by structuralists were “structural analysis” and “immediate constituent analysis.”

The main concern of **STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS** was to investigate the distribution of forms in a language. The method involved the use of ‘test-frames’ that can be sentences with empty slots in them. For example: The ..... is very heavy.

There are a lot of forms that can fit into these slots to produce good grammatical sentences of English (e.g. car, child, radio). As a result, we can propose that because all these forms fit in the same test-frame, they are likely to be examples of the same grammatical category. The label we give to this grammatical category is ‘noun’.

**IMMEDIATE CONSTITUENT ANALYSIS** employed in this approach was designed to show how small constituents in sentences go together to form larger constituents as shown in the following example:

the	man	bought	a	book	for	his	wife

However, when applied to syntax, these procedures were not fully successful. Take the following two sentences:

John is eager to please.

John is easy to please.

According to structuralists, the above sentences have the same structure. But this is contrary to the speakers’ intuition. ‘John’ in the first sentence is the subject of ‘please’; while in the second sentence ‘John’ is the object of ‘please’.

#### 5.4. Generative Grammar

Structural linguists contributed little to our understanding of meaning. Furthermore, since insights into syntax achieved by structuralist approach were limited and with a renewed interest in the rationalist approach to language, some American linguists, led predominantly by the distinguished scholar Noam Chomsky, developed a new approach to the study of language now known as **TRANSFORMATIONAL LINGUISTICS**. Chomsky postulated a syntactic base of language (called deep structure), and a series of rules (called transformations). The end result of a transformational-generative grammar is a surface structure that, after the addition of words and pronunciations, is identical to an actual sentence of a language. All languages have the same deep structure, but they differ from each other in surface structure because of the application of different rules for transformations, pronunciation, and word insertion (for more on this, refer to Chapter 8).

#### 5.5. Teaching Grammar

**TEACHING** (or **PEDAGOGICAL**) **GRAMMAR** refers to a set of language rules written to help speakers to learn another language or dialect. Teaching grammars are used in school to fulfill language requirements. They can be helpful to people who do not speak the standard or prestige dialect, but find it would be advantageous socially and economically to do so. Teaching grammars

state explicitly the rules of the language, list the words and their pronunciations, and aid in learning a new language or dialect.

Teaching grammar assumes that the student already knows one language and compares the grammar of the target language with the grammar of the native language. The meaning of a word is given by providing a **GLOSS** – the parallel word in the student's native language such as *house*, خانه in Persian. Sounds of the target language that do not occur in the native language are often described by reference to known sounds. The rules on how to put words together to form grammatical sentences also refer to the learner's knowledge of his native language.

### **State University Questions**

**1- Alongside comprehension and production of grammatical sentences, native speakers are able to ..... .** (State University, 81)

- 1) comprehensively justify their linguistic intuitions
- 2) formulate the grammar of their language explicitly
- 3) describe the body of linguistic knowledge in their minds
- 4) make judgments about grammatically of different sentences

**2- Mary, a little girl, painted a tree, a house, and a river flowing by the house. Her painting looks real. Her painting is ..... .** (State University, 82)

- 1) interpretive
- 2) symbolic
- 3) indexical
- 4) iconic

**3- Sound symbolism in language ..... .** (State University, 85)

- 1) is a specific example of onomatopoeia
- 2) is exemplified in words such as "lion" as the symbol of bravery
- 3) results from arbitrary sound-concept relationship
- 4) refers to the use of words whose pronunciation suggests the meaning

**4- Which choice is NOT clear evidence that morphemes are typically symbolic?** (State University, 88)

- 1) Synonyms
- 2) Onomatopoeic words
- 3) Translation equivalents
- 4) Iconically expressible meanings

**5- Which of the following is true of an index as a sign? Its form ..... .** (State University, 90)

- 1) has actual characteristics of its meaning
- 2) is arbitrarily associated with its meaning
- 3) has characteristics which are only conventionally associated with its meaning
- 4) has characteristics which are only associated in nature with its meaning

**6- The fact that translation equivalents from language to language are different in form indicates that linguistic signs are ..... .** (State University, 90)

- 1) iconic
- 2) symbolic
- 3) figurative
- 4) indexical

**7- The empiricist camp in linguistics claims that ..... .** (State University, PhD 93)

- 1) languages represent basic human knowledge
- 2) generalizations have no place in empirical studies
- 3) the mind starts out as a blank slate
- 4) the ability to encode input develops universally

**8- Which of the following is FALSE?** (State University, PhD 97)

- 1) In recursion, each noun phrase has the potential to generate a prepositional phrase which may generate another noun phrase, which may generate another prepositional phrase.
- 2) A form of communication that arises when people come into contact sharing no common language is known as pidgin.
- 3) Chomsky's linguistic competence refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology and phonology as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately.
- 4) The theory that language determines other aspects of culture since language provides the categories through which social reality is defined and constructed is called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

**9- If the items of language resemble the objects or activities they refer to, there is said to be a degree of ..... .** (State University, PhD 1400)

- 1) creativity
- 2) reciprocity
- 3) iconicity
- 4) arbitrariness

**10- A skull and crossed bones used as a sign for poison is an example of ..... (State University, PhD 1402)**

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1) an indexical sign | 2) an iconic sign  |
| 3) a regulatory sign | 4) a symbolic sign |

**11- Structural analysis can be best described as the investigation of ..... (State University, PhD 1402)**

- 1) the distribution of grammatical forms in a language
- 2) the structural combination of morphemes, words, and phrases
- 3) the proper use of the language, traditionally based on Latin grammar
- 4) the grammatical category distinguishing first person, second person, and third person

**12- Which statement is the most accurate one about the word “dog”? (State University, PhD 1403)**

- 1) Dog is a linguistic sign whose form is its letters (d,o,g) and whose meaning is Canis familiaris (or however we define “dog”).
- 2) Dog is a linguistic sign whose form is its concept in the mind and whose meaning is Canis familiaris (or however we define “dog”).
- 3) Dog is a linguistic sign whose form is its part of speech “noun” and whose meaning is Canis familiaris (or however we define “dog”).
- 4) Dog is a linguistic sign whose form is its pronunciation [dag] and whose meaning is Canis familiaris (or however we define “dog”).

**13- The notion that certain sound combinations occur in semantically similar words: e.g., [gl] in gleam, glisten, glitter, which all relate to vision is called ..... (State University, PhD 1403)**

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1) sound analogy    | 2) sound symbolism |
| 3) sound initialism | 4) sound synchrony |

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### *State University Answers*

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#### 1- Choice 4

Linguistic knowledge is the knowledge of a language represented by the mental grammar that accounts for speakers' linguistic ability and creativity. For the most part, it is unconscious knowledge. This unconscious knowledge of the syntactic rules of grammar permits us to make grammaticality judgments.

#### 2- Choice 4

As the symbols in painting resemble what they actually refer to, they are of iconic type.

#### 3- Choice 4

There is some **sound symbolism** in language—that is, words whose pronunciation suggests their meanings. Instance of sound symbolism are bow-wow, drip-drip, tick-tock, and *gl* in *gleam*, *glisten*, *glitter*, which all relate to vision.

#### 4- Choice 2

On the contrary, onomatopoeia is an exception to the symbolic nature of linguistic signs.

#### 5- Choice 4

Choice four gives the correct definition of indexical signs.

#### 6- Choice 2

There are three pieces of evidence which support symbolic nature of linguistic signs: translation equivalent, synonym, iconically expressible meaning.

#### 7- Choice 3

The question is whether we have knowledge innately, or derive all our knowledge by experience. The former position was early taken by Rene Descartes, and goes by the name **rationalism**. Descartes' philosophy emphasized the necessity of doubt in acquiring knowledge by introspection, hence his formula "I think, therefore I am". Rationalism inspired a linguistic work known as the Port Royal Grammar by Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot. This grammar tried to show that the grammars of all languages are, in fact, unified at their core by logical structural principles. The alternative to rationalism, **empiricism**, is often represented in the ideas of John Locke who believed that the mind starts out as a blank slate, which we fill with experience and generalizations based on experience.

#### 8- Choice 3

"Social knowledge" has no place in Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence.

#### 9- Choice 3

Refer to Section 1.

#### 10- Choice 1

Refer to Section 1.

#### 11- Choice 1

Refer to Section 5.3.

#### 12- Choice 4

Linguistic sign is a sound or gesture, typically a morpheme in spoken languages and a sign in sign languages, that has a form bound to a meaning in a single unit, e.g., dog is a linguistic sign whose form is its pronunciation [dɒg] and whose meaning is 'Canis familiaris' (or however we define dog).

#### 13- Choice 2

Refer to Section 2.2.

### Azad University Questions

*When a sign language becomes widely used, it develops the same kind of dialects and varieties as occur in spoken language. This kind of variation can be seen in ASL, which is now used by over half a million deaf people-by many, as a native language.*

1- The text implies that sign languages ..... . (Azad University, 80)

- |                                    |                               |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) have their own dialects         | 2) are identical world-widely |
| 3) are terribly hard to understand | 4) have spoken variations too |

2- In order to show that in a certain region, there were poisonous snakes, cave-dwellers used to draw pictures of snakes on the cave walls. Thus, in communication, they used ..... .

(Azad University, 82)

- |          |                    |            |              |
|----------|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| 1) icons | 2) indexical signs | 3) symbols | 4) morphemes |
|----------|--------------------|------------|--------------|

3- The phonetic forms of some words have actual characteristics of their meanings. These forms are technically called ..... . (Azad University, 82)

- |             |               |                |                  |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1) synonyms | 2) polysemies | 3) equivalents | 4) mimetic words |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|

4- If words are typically iconic or indexical, then translation equivalents from language to language would be ..... . (Azad University, 84)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) similar in form as well as meaning  | 2) similar in character as well as use |
| 3) dissimilar both in form and meaning | 4) dissimilar both in function and use |

5- When a sign has actual characteristics of its meaning, it is said to be ..... (Azad University, 85)

- |           |              |             |             |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1) iconic | 2) indexical | 3) symbolic | 4) phonemic |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|-------------|

6- Passengers commuting between cities, sometimes, face a sign with a picture of a fork and spoon, which provides us with information that a restaurant is way ahead. The relationship is ..... .

(Azad University, 86)

- |           |             |              |            |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| 1) iconic | 2) symbolic | 3) indexical | 4) lexical |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|------------|

7- The kind of grammar of a language which represents the unconscious linguistic knowledge or capacity of its speakers and is a model of the mental grammar that every speaker of the language knows is called ..... grammar. (Azad University, 89)

- |                 |              |                |               |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1) prescriptive | 2) universal | 3) descriptive | 4) generative |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|

8- ..... is based on a theory of what every speaker of a language unconsciously knows about the sound patterns of that language. (Azad University, 92)

- |                 |              |               |              |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1) Phonotactics | 2) Phonology | 3) Morphology | 4) Phonetics |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|

## ***Azad University Answers***

### **1- Choice 1**

All languages are productive, dynamic and involved in the process of changing. Sign language, whose only difference with speaking is in the means of communication, undergoes change and has different dialects, too.

### **2- Choice 1**

Cave-carvings, i.e. the *pictures of snakes* showed that there are *snakes* in the region. That is, the forms resemble what they refer to. Therefore, the cave-carvings are iconic symbols.

### **3- Choice 4**

Stem gives the definition onomatopoeic or mimetic words.

### **4- Choice 1**

Iconicity or indexicality means that forms refer to their meaning. If words were iconic or indexical then translation equivalents from one language to another would be similar in both form and meaning.

### **5- Choice 1**

Stem gives the definition of iconic signs.

### **6- Choice 3**

A sign posted at the side of a road, will suggest 'restaurant' or 'food (service)', by the association we can make between fork and spoon and these meanings.

### **7- Choice 3**

There are different kinds of "grammars." The **descriptive grammar** of a language represents the unconscious linguistic knowledge or capacity of its speakers. Such a grammar is a model of the **mental grammar** every speaker of the language possesses. It does not teach the rules of the language; it describes the rules that are already known. A grammar that attempts to legislate what your grammar should be is called a **prescriptive grammar**.

### **8- Choice 2**

**Phonology** is the component of a grammar that includes the inventory of sounds (phonetic and phonemic units) and rules for their combination and pronunciation; the study of the sound systems of all languages.





# Chapter 2

## *Properties of Human Language*

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- ◆ **Types of Signals**
- ◆ **Unique Properties of Human Language**
- ◆ **Properties Common Between Human and Animal Language**
- ◆ **Talking to Animals**

# Properties of Human Language

## 1. TYPES OF SIGNALS

There are two types of signals:

- **Communicative signals:** The use of signals to convey information intentionally, e.g. bird songs are used to attract mates; deaf people use sign language to convey ideas; and others use linguistic signals to their purposes.
- **Informative signals:** Those which convey information unintentionally, e.g. people may notice that you have cold when they see you have a runny nose, sneeze, and speak through your nose, that you are from somewhere else when they see you have a strange accent and so on.

Humans are capable of producing sounds and syllables in a stream of speech that appears to have no communicative purpose, as in **GLOSSOLALIA**, or “speaking in tongues,” which is associated with the religious practices of Pentecostal churches. These outpourings sound like language, but with no speaker control, it isn’t intentional communication. We might say the same thing about some of the chirping and singing produced by birds. When we compare and contrast animal and human language, we are considering them in terms of their potential as intentional signs for communication.

## 2. UNIQUE PROPERTIES OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

### 2.1. Arbitrariness

Based on **ARBITRARINESS**, there is no natural relation between a linguistic form and its meaning. The connection is quite arbitrary. This view is supported by the **CONVENTION(ALIST) POSITION** that the relationship between linguistic signs and objects in the world was conventional and arbitrary with no direct connection to reality. For example, the linguistic form *dog* has no natural or iconic relationship with that hairy four-legged barking object out in the world. This arbitrary relationship between form and meaning of a word is also true in sign languages. If you see someone using a sign language you do not know, it is doubtful that you will understand the message from the sign alone.

The inventory of speech sounds used by a particular language is also arbitrary. English is spoken using only 36 different sounds (a few more or less). But the sounds used in English are not all the same as the sounds needed to speak other languages, nor are they put together in the same way. The 36 sounds of English are in turn arbitrarily represented by 26 letters, some of which

stand for two or more sounds (like *g* in *gin* and in *gimp*) while other sounds are spelled in two or more different ways (consider *c* in *center* and *s* in *sender* or *c* in *cup*, *k* in *kelp*, and *qu* in *quiche*). The patterns into which words and sounds are arranged are also arbitrary. Adjectives go before nouns in English – so it's *fat man*; in French nouns go before adjectives, making it *homme gros*. Some manual signs in sign languages are iconic – they look like what they mean – but most signs give not the slightest clue to their meaning.

On the other hand, those who supported the **NATURAL(IST) POSITION** maintained that the relationship between pronunciation and meaning is a natural one, in which the meaning of a word is evident from its pronunciation. In support of the natural position, scholars cited examples of onomatopoeic words like *bow-wow* in which the pronunciation seems to bear some resemblance to the actual sounds involved in the activity presented by the words.

## 2.2. Displacement

**DISPLACEMENT** is the characteristic that in languages meanings are expressed which are displaced or removed from the concrete or physical presence of the object or stimulus of those meanings. Having symbolic signs means that we can give form to abstract meanings like 'past' and 'future' and associate other signs with these. Indeed, all languages have morphemes and constructions which make it possible to talk about the past and future as well as present, and so to talk about persons and places not present, and even about hypothetical things, like *the present king of France*, *Superman*, *Unicorn*, etc.

It might be argued the language of some animals like bees has this property, as they perform a complex dance to indicate the location of food source; but care must be taken that this is very limited in an extremely limited form.

## 2.3. Cultural Transmission

The process whereby a language is passed on from one generation to the next is described as **CULTURAL TRANSMISSION**. It is clear that humans are born with some kind of predisposition to acquire language in a general sense. However, we are not born with the ability to produce utterances in a specific language such as English. We acquire our first language as children in a culture. Languages differ from place to place in the world and we have to learn the form appropriate for the place.

👂 **Note:** Cultural transmission is in contrast with *innateness* of the signs of animal language. The general pattern of animal communication is that the signals used are instinctive and not learned.

## 2.4. Modularity

Most linguists believe that language is a modular system. That is, people produce and interpret language using a set of component subsystems (or modules) in a coordinated way. These modules include phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, semantics, and discourse. Each module is responsible for a part of the total job; it takes the output of other modules as its input and distributes its own output to those other modules. In all languages, sound units combine to form morphemes, morphemes combine to form words, words combine to form larger units—

phrases and sentences, and sentences combine to form discourse.

## 2.5. Discreteness

An essential property of human language not shared by the communication systems of animals is its **DISCRETENESS**. Human language modules are not simply made up of a fixed set of invariant signs; they are composed of smaller linguistic units. In fact, discreteness segments the continuous space of sound into discrete units – sounds, words, phrases. When we listen to the flow of an utterance we can perceive it to be made up of distinct sounds. The word *top* in English has individual parts – /t/, /ɒ/, /p/ – that can be rearranged to produce *pot* or *opt*. Further, these distinct sounds used in language are meaningfully distinct. For example, the difference between /b/ and /t/ is not very great but in English they distinct meaning in *bake* /beɪk/ and *take* /teɪk/. Similarly, we can decompose words into their constituent parts. For example, *incompletely* can be divided into *in-*, *complete*, *-ly*. These discrete linguistic units can be combined in novel ways to create new words whose meaning will be apparent to other speakers of the language. If you know that ‘to write’ to a DVD means to put information on it, you automatically understand that a rewritable DVD is one on which the original information can be written over. Finally, the phrase *the cat on the mat* is composed of the following discrete units: *the*, *cat*, *on*, *the*, *mat*. These units can be rearranged to produce *the mat on the cat*. We can arrange and rearrange the units of our language to form an infinite number of expressions. The creativity of human language, thus, depends on discreteness.

Discreteness also shows itself in meaning. The color spectrum is a clear example. Color variation is a continuum – red shades through red-orange to orange to yellow-orange to yellow and so on through the spectrum. But all languages divide the color spectrum into discrete categories, although languages differ in how they divide those continua into words. In some languages there are only two basic color terms, roughly meaning ‘light’ and ‘dark;’ others add red, yellow, and green, whereas still others, including English, have developed words for many more colors.

## 2.6. Productivity

Every human language is a **CREATIVE** or **PRODUCTIVE** system in that the system enables its users to continually produce and comprehend novel utterances – utterances that a particular speaker may have neither heard nor produced in the past. And, a linguistic system is infinitely productive, for the range of possible sentences in a language is truly infinite, i.e. human languages have a finite set of forms by which they can produce infinite meaning. In other words, language-users manipulate their linguistic resources to produce new expressions and new sentences. Creativity shows up in:

- **Openness:** Humans are able to come up with new words to express new ideas, new things in the world and new ways of expressing old ones such as *aspirin*.
- **Recursion:** A characteristic of languages that allows phrases to expand. Recursive rules have the capacity to be applied more than once in generating a structure. For example, the phrase *a friend* may expand as *a friend of mine*, and this may be an expansion in another phrase *a friend of a friend of mine*. Another example is the expansion of *meet near the bakery* to *meet near the*

*bakery next to the bookstore to meet near the bakery next to the bookstore behind the park.*  
This property of recursion makes it impossible to set a limit on the length of sentences or the number of sentences.

The recursiveness of language has a profound implication: no one can learn a language by memorizing all the sentences of that language; instead, they must learn the system for creating and combining constituents in that language.

Creativity is in direct contrast to the **FIXED-REFERENCE** feature of animal language: each signal is fixed as relating to a particular object or occasion. For example, Cicadas have four signals to choose from and they cannot manipulate them to produce and express new events and experiences.

## 2.7. Duality of Patterning

**DUALITY** or **DOUBLE ARTICULATION** is the characteristic of linguistic signs that these have a two-part or dual structure, in which the meaningful whole is made up of meaningless parts. Morphemes are meaningful, but the phones and features which make up the phonemes are meaningless. Meaningless units *labial*, *stop*, *voiceless* make up the phoneme *p*, which is still meaningless. The meaningless *p*, *t*, and *a* combine as meaningful units like: *pot*, *opt*, and *top*. So, at one level, we have distinct sounds, and, at another level, we have distinct meanings. This duality is, in fact, one of the most **economical features** of human language because, with a limited set of discrete sounds, we are capable of producing a very large number of sound combinations (words) which are distinct in meaning.

Some books consider duality – also defined as a single sequence of sounds can have more than one meaning – a corollary of arbitrariness. Because there is nothing about the pronunciation of the word *one* [wʌn] that necessarily associates it with the numeral 1, that same sequence of sounds (but spelled *won*) can also be used to mean something entirely different – the past tense of the verb *to win*. But if the same sequence of sounds can represent different concepts in the same language, how are you able to figure out which meaning one intends when they say [wʌn]? The answer is that you **rely on context**. If one says [wʌn] before a noun, as in “[wʌn] dog,” your knowledge of English grammar will lead you to guess that they mean *one*. On the other hand, if one says [wʌn] after a noun (or pronoun), as in “Mary [wʌn],” that same knowledge will lead you to guess that I mean the past tense of *win*.

## 2.8. Grammaticality

**GRAMMATICALITY** or **PATTERNING** is the characteristic of languages that they have rather strict rules about how things may be said. Only certain sounds may be combined in words, and meanings have to be combined in certain ways, in words and sentences. For example, /kæt/ is possible in English but /ktæ/ is not; or to form question from *Fatima is studying* we should invert subject and verb and *Studying Fatima is?* is ungrammatical.

## 2.9. Reflexivity

All creatures communicate in some way, even if it is not through vocalization. However, we suspect that other creatures are not reflecting on the way they create their communicative messages or reviewing how they work (or not). That is, one barking dog is probably not offering advice to

another barking dog along the lines of “Hey, you should lower your bark to make it sound more menacing.” They’re not barking about barking. Humans are clearly able to reflect on language and its uses (e.g., “I wish he wouldn’t use so many technical terms”). This is reflexivity. The property of **REFLEXIVITY** or **REFLEXIVENESS** accounts for the fact that we can use language to think and talk about language itself. Hence, this property is closely related to the concept of meta-language – the language used to analyze or describe a language.

## 2.10. Prevarication


**PREVARICATION** is that property of language through which we can make false statements, lie, deceive and make nonsense statements.

## 2.11. Variability

Although all languages share some universal characteristics, languages also differ in many ways. **VARIABILITY** (or **DIFFERENCE**; **DIVERSITY**) in language allows people to communicate far more than the semantic content of the words and sentences they utter. The variability of language is indexical. Speakers vary the language they use to signal their social identities (geographical, social status, ethnicity, and even gender), and also to define the immediate speech situation.

People let the world know who they are by the variety of their language that they use. They reveal their geographical and social status origins after saying just a few words. People also use their variety of language to signal membership in a range of overlapping social groups – as male or female, as a teenager or an adult, as a member of a particular ethnic group. People also use language variation to communicate the situation and purpose in which they are talking, as well as the roles they are playing in those situations. A priest uses different forms of language during a sermon than during the social hour after a church service, playing different roles (and projecting different roles on the churchgoers he addresses). At work, people speak differently to subordinates than to superiors, and differently during coffee breaks than in meetings.

A large part of a speech community’s culture is transacted through the medium of language variation. Norms of appropriate language use help speakers to construct and negotiate their relations to each other. The unwritten and unconsciously applied rules for the various forms and uses of language can vary from one cultural milieu to another, within and between societies, and even between genders.

 **Note:** *One of the consequences of language variation is that no variety or dialect of a language can be better than any other. Every grammar is equally complex, logical and capable of producing an infinite set of sentences to express any thought. All languages and dialects are rule-governed, whether spoken by rich or poor, powerful or weak, learned or illiterate. Grammars and usages of particular groups in society may be dominant for social and political reasons, but from a linguistic (scientific) perspective they are neither superior nor inferior to the grammars and usages of less prestigious members of society. If something can be expressed in one language or one dialect, it can be expressed in any other language or dialect. It might involve different meanings and different words, but it can be expressed.*