**LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS**

**Linguistics**

**Introduction to Linguistics**

Every human knows at least one language, spoken or signed. Linguistics is the science of language, including the sounds, words, and grammar rules. Words in languages are finite, but sentences are not. It is this creative aspect of human language that sets it apart from animal languages, which are essentially responses to stimuli.

The rules of a language, also called grammar, are learned as one acquires a language. These rules include **phonology**, the sound system, **morphology**, the structure of words, **syntax**, the combination of words into sentences, **semantics**, the ways in which sounds and meanings are related, and the **lexicon**, or mental dictionary of words. When you know a language, you know words in that language, i.e. sound units that are related to specific meanings. However, the sounds and meanings of words are arbitrary. For the most part, there is no relationship between the way a word is pronounced (or signed) and its meaning.

Knowing a language encompasses this entire system, but this knowledge (called **competence**) is different from behavior (called **performance**.) You may know a language, but you may also choose to not speak it. Although you are not speaking the language, you still have the knowledge of it. However, if you don't know a language, you cannot speak it at all.

There are two types of grammars: descriptive and prescriptive. **Descriptive grammars** represent the unconscious knowledge of a language. English speakers, for example, know that "me likes apples" is incorrect and "I like apples" is correct, although the speaker may not be able to explain why. Descriptive grammars do not teach the rules of a language, but rather describe rules that are already known. In contrast, **prescriptive grammars**dictate what a speaker's grammar should be and they include teaching grammars, which are written to help teach a foreign language.

There are about 5,000 languages in the world right now (give or take a few thousand), and linguists have discovered that these languages are more alike than different from each other. There are universal concepts and properties that are shared by all languages, and these principles are contained in the **Universal Grammar**, which forms the basis of all possible human languages.

**Morphemes**

**Morphemes** are the minimal units of words that have a meaning and cannot be subdivided further. There are two main types: free and bound. Free morphemes can occur alone and bound morphemes must occur with another morpheme. An example of a free morpheme is "bad", and an example of a bound morpheme is "ly." It is bound because although it has meaning, it cannot stand alone. It must be attached to another morpheme to produce a word.

Free morpheme: bad

Bound morpheme: ly

Word: badly

When we talk about words, there are two groups: **lexical**(or content) and **function** (or grammatical) words. Lexical words are called open class words and include nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. New words can regularly be added to this group. Function words, or closed class words, are conjunctions, prepositions, articles and pronouns; and new words cannot be (or are very rarely) added to this class.

**Phonetics and Phonology**

There are three types of the study of the sounds of language. **Acoustic Phonetics** is the study of the physical properties of sounds. **Auditory Phonetics** is the study of the way listeners perceive sounds. **Articulatory Phonetics**(the type this lesson is concerned with) is the study of how the vocal tracts produce the sounds.

The orthography (spelling) of words in misleading, especially in English. One sound can be represented by several different combinations of letters. For example, all of the following words contain the same vowel sound: h*e*, bel*ie*ve, L*ee*, C*ae*sar, k*ey*, am*oe*ba, loudl*y*, mach*i*ne, p*eo*ple, and s*ea*. The following poem illustrates this fact of English humorously (note the pronunciation of the bold words):

I take it you already **know** of **tough** and **bough** and **cough**and **dough**?

Some may stumble, but not **you**, on **hiccough**, **thorough**, **slough**, and **through**?

So now you are ready, perhaps, to learn of less familiar traps? Beware of **heard**, a dreadful **word**, that looks like **beard**, but sounds like **bird**.

And **dead**, it's **said** like **bed**, not **bead**; for goodness' sake, don't call it **deed**!

Watch out for **meat** and **great**and **threat**. (They rhyme with **suite** and **straight** and **debt**.) A **moth** is not a moth in **mother**, nor **both** in **bother**, **broth** in **brother**.

And **here** is not a match for **there**, nor **dear** and **fear**, for **bear** and **pear**.

And then there's **dose** and **rose** and **lose** - just look them up - and **goose** and **choose**

And **cork** and **work** and **card** and **ward** and **font** and **front** and **word** and **sword**

And **do** and **go**, then **thwart** and **cart**, come, come! I've hardly made a start.

A dreadful language? Why man alive! I've learned to talk it when I was five. And yet to write it, the more I tried, I hadn't learned it at fifty-five. *- Author Unknown*

**International Phonetics Alphabet (IPA)**

The discrepancy between spelling and sounds led to the formation of the **International Phonetics Alphabet**(IPA.) The symbols used in this alphabet can be used to represent all sounds of all human languages. The following is the English Phonetic alphabet. You might want to memorize all of these symbols, as most foreign language dictionaries use the IPA.

Phonetic Alphabet

Some speakers of English pronounce the words which and witch differently, but if you pronounce both words identically, just use w for both words. And the sounds /ʌ/ and /ə/ are pronounced the same, but the former is used in stressed syllables, while the latter is used in unstressed syllables. This list does not even begin to include all of the phonetic symbols though. One other symbol is the glottal stop, ʔ which is somewhat rare in English. Some linguists in the United States traditionally use different symbols than the IPA symbols. These are listed below.

U.S.IPAšʃžʒčtʃǰdʒUʊ

The production of any speech sound involves the movement of air. Air is pushed through the lungs, larynx (vocal folds) and vocal tract (the oral and nasal cavities.) Sounds produced by using air from the lungs are called **pulmonic** sounds. If the air is pushed out, it is called **egressive**. If the air is sucked in, it is called **ingressive**. Sounds produced by ingressive airstreams are ejectives, implosives, and clicks. These sounds are common among African and American Indian languages. The majority of languages in the world use pulmonic egressive airstream mechanisms, and I will present only these types of sounds in this lesson.

**Semantics**

Lexical semantics is concerned with the meanings of words and the meaning of relationships among words, while phrasal semantics is concerned with the meaning of syntactic units larger than the word. Pragmatics is the study of how context affects meaning, such as how sentences are interpreted in certain situations.

Semantic properties are the components of meanings of words. For example, the semantic property "human" can be found in many words such as parent, doctor, baby, professor, widow, and aunt. Other semantic properties include animate objects, male, female, countable items and non-countable items.

**Syntax definition:**Syntax is the grammatical structure of words and phrases to create coherent sentences.

**What is syntax?**

**What does syntax mean?**Syntax is the grammatical structure of sentences. The format in which words and phrases are arranged to create sentences is called syntax.

Let’s look at an example of how a sentence can be rearranged to create varied syntax.

**Examples of Syntax in a Sentence:**

The boy jumped *happily*.

The boy *happily*jumped.

*Happily*, the boy jumped.



By rearranging just one word in the sentence, a varied syntax is formed. Each is grammatically correct and acceptable English language form.

A writer will vary sentence syntax to make writing more interesting or to emphasize a particular point.

Words and phrases must follow English rules for correct arrangement and coherent sentences.

**Syntax vs. Diction: What’s the Difference?**

Syntax and diction are different concepts in grammar and in literature.

**What is syntax?**Syntax is the arrangement of words that make a sentence.

**What is diction?**Diction is word choice.



The following examples have similar syntax but different diction.

The boy jumped happily.

The girl sang beautifully.

The dog barked loudly.

Each of these sentences has the same syntax. Each sentence follows the structure of subject-verb-adverb. However, each sentence uses different diction (word choice).

The following examples have similar diction but different syntax.

The boy jumped *happily*.

The boy *happily*

*Happily*, the boy jumped.

Each of these sentences has the same diction. Each sentence uses the same four words. However, each sentence has different word order to create different syntax.

In other words, diction and syntax focus on different things. Diction focuses on word choice, while syntax focuses on the order and structure of those words.

**Proper Syntax in English Sentences**



In English, a strong, active voice sentence will always have the subject doing the action of the sentence. These sentences will follow a basic subject-verb-object format.

Below are a few examples of different types of syntax in English. Each of these examples has different syntax.

**Simple sentences** follow a subject-verbformat.

**Simple Syntax Examples:**

The boy jumped.

The girl sang.

**Compound sentences** have more than one subject or verb.

**Compound Syntax Examples:**

The boy jumped and the girl sang.

I did not go to the concert but I went to the fair.

**Complex sentences** contain a subordinating clause.

**Complex Syntax Examples:**

The boy jumped even though he was nervous.

Because she was excited, the girl sang.

**Compound-complex sentences** contain two independent clauses and more dependent clauses.

**Compound-complex Syntax Examples:**

Even though he was nervous, the boy jumped and he landed across the stream.

The girl sang and the woman shrieked because they were excited.