


English Liberal Arts Program, Yala Rajabhat University

Introduction to Linguistics & English Language

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Overview

An introduction to the nature of human language and language acquisition; a brief history of the linguistics and the English language; definition and scope of linguistics and its branches; English as an international language

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- Critically discuss the definition of "LANGUAGE" in your own words
- Suppose you taught a cat to heel, sit up, roll over, play dead, stay, jump, and bark on command. Would you be teaching it language? Why or why not?
- Describe any other communication system that, like language, consists of arbitrary symbols. Example: traffic signals, in which red means stop and green means go.

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When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the "human essence," the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man. - NOAM CHOMSKY, *Language and Mind*, 1968

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Linguistic Knowledge ?

- Knowledge of the Sound System
- Knowledge of Words
- The Creativity of Linguistic Knowledge
- Knowledge of Sentences and Nonsentences
- Linguistic Knowledge and Performance

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1. Knowledge of the Sound System

- Part of knowing a language means knowing what sounds (or signs) are in that language and what sounds are not.
- The name of a former president of Ghana was *Nkrumah*, pronounced with an initial sound like the sound ending the English word *sink*. While this is an English sound, no word in English begins with the *nk* sound.

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2. Knowledge of Words

- Speakers of English understand what *boy* means, and that it means something different from *toy* or *girl*. We also know that *toy* and *boy* are words, but *woy* is not.
- There is some sound symbolism in language—that is, words whose pronunciation suggests their meanings. Most languages contain **onomatopoeic** words.

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3. The Creativity of Linguistic Knowledge

- Knowledge of a language enables you to combine sounds to form words, words to form phrases, and phrases to form sentences.
- Knowing a language means being able to produce and understand new sentences never spoken before.

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Ex.1

This is the house.

This is the house that Jack built.

This is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built.

Ex.2

The old man came.

The old, old, old, old, old man came.

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4. Knowledge of Sentences and Nonsentences

1. John kissed the little old lady who owned the shaggy dog.
2. Who owned the shaggy dog John kissed the little old lady.
3. John is difficult to love.
4. It is difficult to love John.
5. John is anxious to go.
6. It is anxious to go John.
7. John, who was a student, flunked his exams.
8. Exams his flunked student a was who John.

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5. Linguistic Knowledge and Performance

- Speakers of all languages have the knowledge to understand or produce sentences of any length.
- Evidently, there is a difference between having the knowledge required to produce or understand sentences of a language and applying this knowledge.
- **Linguistic competence VS Linguistic performance.**

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What Is Grammar?

- When linguists wish to describe a language, they make explicit the rules of 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.

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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 judgments about well-formedness, and it tells what you know

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Prescriptive grammar

- 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.

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Universal Grammar

- There are rules of particular languages, such as English or Arabic or Zulu, that form part of the individual grammars of these languages, and then there are rules that hold in all languages.

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Sign Languages: Evidence for Language Universals

- Deaf children who are exposed to signed languages acquire them just as hearing children acquire spoken languages, going through the same linguistic stages, including the babbling stage.
- Signed languages resemble spoken languages in all major aspects.

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Q & A Session



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