

Introduction to Linguistics
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[contact information]

"Everything that we have so far seen to be true of language points to the fact that it is the most significant and colossal work that the human spirit has evolved -- nothing short of a finished form of expression for all communicable experience. This form may be endlessly varied by the individual without thereby losing its distinctive contours; and it is constantly reshaping itself as is all art. Language is the most massive and inclusive art we know, a mountainous and anonymous work of unconscious generations."

Sapir, Language. 1921

Q: What is Linguistics, anyway?

A: Linguistics is the scientific study of human language.

Goals of this course

- gain a basic understanding of the subsystems of language, with emphasis on English
- acquire the technical vocabulary of linguistics
- develop basic skills in structural analysis
- replace myths about grammar and well-formedness with facts about language history, structure and function across time, space and social dimensions
- learn appreciation (or at least tolerance) of varieties of English other than your own
- distinguish between written and spoken language in analysis and evaluation

What this course is not about

- punctuation, of any kind; literature; rhetoric; or spelling (we deal almost exclusively with spoken human language)
- "proper" English (we study the language in its entirety, and avoid aesthetic or politically motivated exclusionary tactics)

Q: What do you mean by "human language"?

A: All humans have some language, without exception. It's a distinguishing biological trait of Homo Sapiens. And all human languages have a lot of similarities, and they tell us quite a lot about what it means to be human, which is a big preoccupation of H. Sapiens.

Requirements and Evaluation

- You must keep a class journal/notebook. Written assignments will be completed directly in the notebook. You will be allowed to use your notebook during the midterm exam, and therefore I suggest you use it to record both classroom notes and reading notes.
- There are reading assignments for each class.
- There are internet assignments.
- Exercises and problem sets will be assigned regularly, to be completed in your journals.

- There is an in-class midterm (short answer and short problem).
- There is a take home final exam.
- Thoughtful contribution to discussions is an important part of your performance and will be evaluated. If you are not present, you cannot participate. Attendance will be taken at every class.

Q: All right, what do you mean by "scientific"?

A: Objective, unbiased, data-oriented, and reproducible, among other meanings. Simply put, linguists are concerned with how language actually does work, rather than with how (somebody says) it ought to work. This is a fairly new approach to a very old interest, since people have always been interested in language, even though it is a hard subject to talk about.

General Guidelines

Come and talk to me about little problems before they become big problems. Come during office hours; or make an appointment. Email is generally the quickest way to find me; I will return phone calls, but it may take some time.

Required Textbook: An Introduction to Language. Victoria Fromkin, Robert Rodman.

Q: How old is Linguistics, then?

A: Linguistics is paradoxically both a very old and a very new discipline. It's very old because its physical and physiological basis is the science of Phonetics (the study of how the sounds of human speech are produced and perceived), which was founded in ancient India about 2500 years ago, roughly the same time the Periclean Golden Age was happening in Athens. Later, three of the classical and medieval Seven Liberal Arts, studied by all university students as a basis for all other studies, were concerned with language: Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic. All of these ancient disciplines have found their way into modern Linguistics.

Linguistics is also very new because Western science didn't put all this together into a useful discipline until about 200 years ago, and didn't invent many other useful ways to study other aspects of human language until the present century. In fact, it's so new that most Americans, for instance, know even less about Linguistics (and about languages, including their own) than they do about mathematics; both are notoriously difficult things to talk and to think about.

Q: Why is that? And how do you get around it?

A: Linguistics is a bit unusual as a discipline because human language is so ubiquitous that it permeates everything in our experience. It's not all that easy to think and talk about, since you have to use language to do that. So linguists have tried all kinds of ways to study language, and found out all kinds of things from each method. In consequence, Linguistics extends across the modern academic categories of Natural Science, Social Science, and Humanities. Phonetics is a natural science, encompassing parts of Acoustics and Human Physiology, Anatomy, and Perceptual Psychology. But Sociolinguistics (the study of how

language works in social interaction), Ethnolinguistics (the study of language as a part of culture), and Psycholinguistics (the study of how humans learn and use language individually) are social sciences -- allied (respectively) with Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology. And Text Analysis (the study of how authors use written language to produce the effects they do) is one of the humanities, affiliated with Literary Criticism. Finally, Syntax (the part of Grammar that studies how words go together to form phrases and clauses) is related to some parts of Mathematics.

Syllabus

Class Session		Topic
1	1/5	Introduction/Organization review of basic terminology
2	1/7	What is language?
3	1/1 2	Morphology
4	1/1 4	Morphology
5	1/1 9	Syntax
6	1/2 1	Syntax FILM: DISCOVERING THE HUMAN LANGUAGE
7	1/2 6	Phonetics/Phonology
8	1/2 8	Phonetics/Phonology
9	2/2	Review/catch up
10	2/4	Midterm
11	2/9	Lg Acquisition FILM: ACQUIRING THE HUMAN LANGUAGE
12	2/1 1	Acquisition
13	2/1 6	Multilingualism
14	2/1 8	Language and gender
15	2/2 3	Language and gender
16	2/2 5	Sociolinguistics
17	3/2	Sociolinguistics FILM: AMERICAN TONGUES
18	3/4	Sociolinguistics

Q: What can I do with a Linguistics major?

A: About the same thing you can do with any humanities major: learn to think. College isn't really about job training; college is about expanding your intellectual skills and building up your knowledge base to use them on; "furnishing your mind so you have a place to live in twenty years."

Linguistics does, however, convey certain benefits as a major: it requires, for successful assimilation, a very broad view of human history and geography, since languages are everywhere people are, and don't pay much attention to physical or political boundaries. And a good grasp of global reality turns out to be useful. It applies everywhere, since language is ubiquitous in the human species, and thus the study of Linguistics (much like the study of History) gives one a point of view, a place to stand where one can study absolutely anything. Again, a broad perspective on human knowledge and the willingness to investigate anything is a very useful intellectual tool. The study of Linguistics is largely an analytic discipline, and the analytic tools one learns generalize nicely to virtually any subject; this can often come in handy. Finally, Linguistics is fun, and some people enjoy having fun.

There are also certain drawbacks to the study of Linguistics as well: since it is not a commonly-studied subject in the United States, majors in Linguistics frequently have to explain what it is, and even how to spell it. It is not even unheard-of for Linguistics majors to have problems explaining to their parents what Linguistics is. Similarly, everybody asks linguists how many languages they speak. This is the wrong question, and there's no good answer for it. You'll see. Linguistics has a certain (mostly undeserved) reputation as being difficult, so many Linguistics concentrators report that people often perceive them as very smart, simply because these people know almost nothing about Linguistics. This can occasionally be embarrassing.

Thanks to John Lawler, University of Michigan (emeritus)

The problem sets that follow are adapted from a number of web and text sites. Most of the early ones come from John Lawler's former linguistics website.

NEGATIVE POLARITY

There is a dialectal distinction in American English around "any()more".

1) "negative anymore" He's not here any more. It's hard to find one anymore. I'm not waiting any more. You won't have me to kick around anymore.

2) "positive anymore" It's easy to find a good bagel any more. There are lots of places to buy a used car anymore. They used to call it a meeting but anymore we call it a conspiracy.

The Negative Polarity "anymore" is a feature of all varieties of U.S. English. The positive "anymore" occurs much more in speech than in writing, and is not found in all varieties.

Negative "anymore" works like this: there's an implicit presupposed reference to a past situation, and an overt assertion about the present state, and the assertion is to the effect that the present state is different from the past. This is stated by using a negative in the present state ("He's not here any more.") This is only

one way of stating such a difference, however, and it's equally plausible that one might want to avoid a negative in stating a difference. Not all differences need to focus on negation.

For instance, if we wanted to assert the reference to the past situation instead of presuppose it (and presuppose the present difference instead of asserting it), we could say "He used to be here" instead of "He isn't here any more". Both are true under the same circumstances; but they negate differently.

So "anymore" gets generalized to the point where it's equivalent to, but in a different "register" (= social formality level) from "nowadays".

Apparently, for users of positive "anymore", "nowadays" doesn't cut it anymore. Anymore, they use "anymore" instead. Or perhaps only in certain speech contexts; the definitive sociolinguistic study remains to be done.

PARTIAL VERBS

Question: Please tell me more about using "wake" in the present perfect. I have always felt so uncomfortable about this that I use circumlocutions to avoid using it. All of these make sense to me: "I woke/woke up/awoke at 7:00 AM." "I should be wakened/awakened . . ." "I wake up/awaken around ..." "I was wakened/awoken ..." "I woke/awoke ..." "Hush! You'll wake the baby!" "When do you normally wake/awaken?" "The noise does/did/will wake me/awaken me/wake me up." "I/he waked up at 7:00 AM" gives me the willies.

"wake in the present perfect" is a great example of a partial or "defective" verb; i.e, one that lacks a principal part,....

WAIT! Principal part?!?!?

OK, it's like this: in looking at the way verbs work, we classify them according to tense, and we call the major divisions the "principal parts". There are two kinds of verbs, weak (the vowel doesn't change when you change tense, you just stick an -ed on the end) and strong (vowels change). It's easiest to talk about principal parts for strong verbs, for example:

sing.....sang..... sung
present /past /past participle (for use in the present perfect, 'have sung')

And of course, "present perfect" is absolutely confusing, because it isn't the present, it's the past. It's called the "present" perfect because the auxiliary verb ("have" or "is" shows up in the present tense). The past perfect for sing is, of course "had sung".

[sorry for the interruption....back to the question in progress].... in this case the past participle, the one that's used in the present perfect construction. The problem is that "wake" just doesn't *have* a past participle.

People get around the problem in a number of ways. You can always avoid the present perfect with a little care in rephrasing, or you can use one of the other verbs that are formed with available derivational scraps: wake woke * waken wakened wakened awake awoke * awaken awakened awakened.

The -en suffix is a relatively non-productive causative affix; white/whiten, dark/darken, red/redden, stiff/stiffen, live/liven, (but: blue/*bluen, orange/*orangen, tall/*tallen, big/*biggen), etc. Since "wake" is inchoative (i.e, it refers to changing from one state to another), its causative means to cause someone to

wake, which can be oneself, so there's an inchoative sense available, too, and that means "waken" can be used as a synonym for "wake". And, causative verbs with -en are regular, so there's a guaranteed past participle.

Other English defective verbs include 'beware' (usable in the imperative only), 'blowdry' (try forming the past tense and you'll see what I mean), 'born' (technically, a "deponent" verb, with only passive forms), and the modal auxiliaries, but they're so irregular anyway that's hardly surprising.

Question: When we say, "It's raining," to what does "it" refer?

Let me guess. Some teacher in grade school taught you that all pronouns must have an antecedent, and you can't figure out how there can be an antecedent in It's raining.

Well, you're right. You can't find an antecedent in It's raining. What Miss Fidditch should have told you is that referential pronouns have to have an antecedent. But not all pronoun usage is referential. Pronouns are not always atomic, meaningful words like book and keep; quite often they're ionized for use as pieces of grammar, like the -er or the -s in bookkeepers.

All the common contractions with subject it are really grammar markings:

it's [meaning 'it is'] Progressive or Passive [meaning 'it has'] Perfect it'd [meaning 'it would']
Conditional [meaning 'it had'] Pluperfect it'll [meaning 'it will'] Future

And those are only the ones with funny spellings; there are plenty of other special-purpose its that we don't bother to spell, and therefore don't pay any attention to, like the little chirp that constitutes the second syllable of Check it out in ordinary speech.

English is the kind of language (an "analytic" or "positional" language) that has most of its grammar concerned with word order, which word to use, prepositions and pronouns and "little words" and how they're organized. In a word, Syntax.

Languages farther toward the "synthetic" end of the analytic-synthetic axis, (e.g, German, Spanish, Latin, Homeric Greek, Sanskrit, Navaho, Lushootseed, and Inuit, to list a few synthetic languages, in increasing order of syntheticity) tend to use more and more affixes and other form-changing kinds of grammar (in a word, Morphology), and syntax is less and less important in them. Morphology and Syntax are, respectively, the internal and the external economy of words, and together they make up Grammar.

OK, so what about It's raining? It's a kind of construction called a Dummy it. That is, the it has no meaning whatsoever (you're far from the first to be puzzled by it) and is used strictly as a placeholder, like the dummy hand in bridge, or the zero on 101. Why do anything that bizarre? Well, see, English Syntax has this Rule that says -- in ponderous and self-enforcing tones -- Thou Shalt Have A Subject In Every Finite Sentence. And thou must, indeed. (Of course, you are allowed to delete the subject sometimes. As in "Got home at three and just fell into bed").

Ordinarily, this Subject is some noun or referential pronoun that is the salient agent or experiencer or patient of whatever the verbal predicate refers to:

the writer in He wrote it the hearer in He heard it the hurter in He hurt it.

This falls down when dealing with some predicates. Rain is a superb example. Rain is a thing and an event, both nouny and verby. In using it as a verb, we must endow it with a Subject. But it's already its own subject, self-activating.

Solution: a Dummy Subject, obeying the letter but not the spirit of The Rule. One of several: this particular construction is called Weather it, to distinguish it from Distance it in It's a long way to Schenectady or Extraposition it in It's important to me that she be present. --which is related by a syntactic rule called Extraposition to That she be present is important to me. And there are Other Dummies as well,

like the there in There is a unicorn in the garden. or the it in Why don't we do it in the road? Dummy words, placeholders, are fairly common in analytical languages.

These are special constructions, of which there are many thousands in English, and in every other language. This kind of information generally comes as a surprise, though, to many people whose grammar schooling took place in the U.S. The educational approach to English grammar that we appear to be stuck with in American English, at least, has been heavily influenced by Latin, where virtually all pronouns were referential, and where there was lots more morphology, and therefore a word-based grammatical tradition was reasonable. In English, though, you have to use a construction-based grammar to get decent descriptions and explanations.

Since almost nobody studies Latin any more (and those who become our teachers, and those who train them, are no more likely than others), what's left in the schools is a catechism of shibboleths and jargon that nobody claims to understand. And nobody does. Perhaps in another century or two, the school system will accelerate to match the glacial pace of language change, and children will actually be taught to see the grammar of their own living language.

ELLIPSIS/DELETION

So, how about " 's raining"? ("Is raining": all the words really needed to express the meaning of this sentence)?

'S raining is one way of many that we can pronounce It's raining. The beginning of a sentence, especially if it's predictable and meaning-free, is a frequent place for dropping things.

Never see that again. [I'll deleted]

Daughter's on the phone, Bob. [Your deleted]

Never been there. [I've deleted]

GOTTEN/GOT

Here's what David Crystal says about The gotten/got distinction in The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language (p.311):

"Gotten is probably the most distinctive of all the American/British English grammatical differences, but British people who try to use it often get it wrong. It is not simply an alternative for have got. Gotten is used in such contexts as They've gotten a new boat. (= obtain) They've gotten interested. (= become) He's gotten off the chair. (= moved) But it is not used in the sense of possession (= have). American English does not allow *I've gotten the answer. or *I've gotten plenty -- it uses I've got as in informal British English. The availability of gotten does however mean that American English can make such distinctions as the following: They've got to leave (they must leave) vs They've gotten to leave (they've managed to leave)."

What does "I've gotten the answer" mean in American English?

GRAMMATICALIZATION

Grammaticalization is what we call the process by which grammatical forms develop out of lexical words or ordinary syntactic constructions. A classic example is the development of the modern English future marker be + gonna, which originates in a construction like I'm going (to the store) to buy some milk. Over time the going to lost its lexical sense involving motion, coming to refer only to the futurity of the to-clause;

consequently it ceased to take stress, and became phonologically reduced to gonna (even farther, in some contemporary dialects).

This process is the origin of virtually all grammatical forms. It is certainly a crucial part of diachronic linguistics. There are arguments for its relevance to synchronic analysis as well-- for example, English (or any other language) has a number of grammatical or quasi-grammatical morphemes (gonna, usta, etc.) which do not easily fit into any syntactic category (usta, for example, behaves neither like a verb nor an auxiliary, or anything else), and there is often no satisfactory synchronic account that can be given of these without reference to their status as partially grammaticalized forms.

In each of the following paragraphs: identify subject(s), direct objects, indirect objects, relative clauses (coordinate and subordinate), adjectives, adverbs, passive constructions, verb clauses, prepositional phrases.

A) So I pretty much had an idea that it was a form of leukemia, but now, you have about five or six different types. And the more they worked on Mom, the more hers seemed to go into the acute. And as time goes by, see, I'm saying to myself: now, this is not the one we want. We're not even going to deal with this one. And once I got that "acute" put aside, I'm just dealing with these leukemias right here 'cause we can, you know, we can fix it and work with it and all this kind of stuff. But in my mind, I knew because of certain things that was going on, it -- all the symptoms were in the "acute." And I'd been talking to Dr. Felice off and on. And finally, he called me and he said that I could get the family in, and he was going to tell mom and tell everybody what she had. And so, he said that she had the acute leukemia, which made me angry because he had gone against what I didn't want her to have.

B) Leukemia is a malignant disorder of the blood. The blood-producing bone marrow stops making a sufficient number of normal blood cells. White blood cells can no longer fight infection. Red blood cells cannot adequately supply the body with oxygen, and the blood's platelets lose the capacity to form clots. Helen Payne's diagnosis of acute leukemia meant she had a rapidly-progressing form of the disease.

C) What is it like to live your life on the streets? With unprecedented 24-hour access to the Sunshine Hotel, Isay and associate producer Stacy Abramson offer an upclose account of a world which has rarely before been documented. Starting at \$4.50 a night, Bowery flophouses are the cheapest form of housing available. There are rows of wooden cubicles, rooms smaller than prison cells, a bed, a locker, a bare bulb, and chicken wire ceiling. "The Sunshine is this fascinating, self-contained society full of unbelievable characters," said Isay. "While it's a profoundly sad place, it is, at the same time, home to men with powerful and poetic stories to tell."

D) Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men, generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to put out its faults, and do better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels? (Thoreau)