

LECTURE NOTES DIS516
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HUMAN LANGUAGE = a system of signs used to communicate about things and ideas in a common context, often reflecting a common world-view.

Main factors in language learning:

Motivation, organisational requirements, learning style and social involvement.

All languages perform the same tasks:

- Indicate how the content is to be understood.
- Identify actors, qualities, and action, as well as the relations between these.
- Formulate propositions and logical relations between these.
- Introduce actors, keep track of them, and assign their roles.
- Distinguish background information from main actions.
- Show contrasts and mark the unexpected and the important.

Languages tools = lexicon, morphology, word order in the stream of speech, stress, and intonation. Each language has its own strategy, using these tools with different functions.

Three dimensions:

1. Meaning.
2. Grammar: morphology + syntax + discourse.
3. Sounds (phonology: possible sounds and combinations of sounds).

Neither animals nor computers have a language.

Language media: speech, texts, sounds, signing.

Phonetics = how meaningful sounds are made.

Phonology = the sounds of a particular language.

Note: In UK and US, women pronounce their consonants farther forward in their mouth than do men.

ENGLISH SPEECH SOUNDS

May be aspirate or not with no change of meaning.

CONSONANTS (obstruants)

Stops

voiced	b	d	g	'	
unvoiced	p	t	k		
Nasal	m	n	ng		Velic passage open

Fricatives

voiced	v	th	z	h
unvoiced	f	th	s	
affricative	tsh	dj		

Voiced & unvoiced can occur aspirate (k^h), unasprate (k) and unreleased (k^-)

VOWELS (continuants)
Mouth and tongue falling

Unrounded		Rounded	
(Front of mouth)			
i	beet	û	boot
I	bit	u	book
e	bait		
ε	bet		
(Back of mouth)			
ae	bat	o	boat
a	pot	wa	taught

LANGUAGE LEARNERS must firstly become aware of another language's sounds, then learn to make those sounds. Mouth architecture actually differs between regions and ethnies. Adopt the system and work at sounding pleasant. However, locals expect less cultural knowledge of those who have an accent.

Glide = moving between two vowels; treat as two vowels if there is a meaning difference.

Phoneme = meaningfully distinct sounds. Groups of phones heard with the same meaning.

English released (lips) and unreleased (lip) “p” has no meaningful difference, = allophones.

Mandarin has no b, only p and p^h.

English cannot pronounce a released consonant following a voiceless sound. Hence Kill (k^h), skip (k[−]), till T^h), still (t) and silt (t[−]).

American English flapped r (ř) appears as an allophone of t.

Metal (substance), medal (decoration) and meddle (verb), formally distinguished by sound, are now pronounced alike, distinguished by grammatical function.

At around puberty, the brain stops leaning sounds quickly.

MEANING derives from (linguistic) utterance + (non-linguistic) context (background: worldview, culture, history, topic, surroundings, experience).

GRAMMAR(“linguistic context”) = set of restrictions.

Syntax: word and phrase order, assigning roles, functions. (“Man bites dog.”)

Morphology: joining of phonemes into words.

Discourse: recipes for what to include.

“Galen likes bikes.”

Galen = the one in this class. Bikes = bicycles. Likes = Galen is singular subject, not bikes.

Meaning never passes perfectly; continuing conversation allows speakers pass more meaning. Since texts exclude communication, one must seek more clues in the context.

MORPHEME = smallest unit of meaning. E.g. “s” = plural.

ALLOMORPH = different sounds having the same meaning. E.g., /s/ = /z/ after voiced consonants.

These may occur bound or free. Il-legitimate, im-partial, in-comprehensible, dis-inclined.

All languages can, and usually do, communicate the same information, although they do so through different grammatical parts.

WORDS may consist of a single morpheme (bird), several free morphemes (blackbird), free morphemes plus affixes (non-bird), reduplication (ibu-ibu), root or stem change (man-men), morpheme + obligatory tone.

Intonation = non-obligatory sound imposed on several words together. E.g., English pitch change in the asking of questions. The same may be accomplished with a morpheme, like Mandarin "...ma?".

In Mandarin, each written character = one morpheme. They have some 60,000. Three morphemes together = "bicycle"; since removing any one of them changes the meaning, the three together constitute one word.

Chinese = isolating, German = agglutinating. English = more iso than glu, depending on word order.

GRAMMAR

Language grammars may require (1) distance of objects, (2) completeness of actions, (3) how sure the speaker is about the truth of statements*, or (4) honorific. Non-obligatory information never appears as part of the grammar. English grammar requires one to indicate complete or incomplete action. *via verb suffixes = I saw..., they say....

Grammar, by lumping or splitting, assigns roles to words while orienting in time and space.

TONE & INTONATION both use pitch. The presence of either tends to exclude the other.

LEXICON Each language has its habitual use of lexical terms within contexts, which only native speakers can sense well.

HEIRARCHY of meaningful units:

Discourse

text

episodes

paragraphs

Syntax

Sentences

clauses

Phrases

Morphology

words

morphemes

phonemes

SCRIPTS = Sets of ideas and actions that a culture deems normal at given times and places. Outsiders do not know the scripts and can easily say and do things offensively.

Listen for understanding, early in language learning, without trying to generate speech. The human brain sorts out the phonology unconsciously.

LEXICON No two languages group and label many things alike. Find how a language's set of terms overlaps with your own set. Ask, What are the kinds of ...? It is a kind of what? What is it about ... that distinguishes it from ...?

There is a prototype of most sets of objects. Objects that have most of its attributes fit the type, even if called something else in a different context.

METAPHORE = using a prototype for an object by "extension". Metaphors become enshrined by usage. These can seldom be translated as such. Over time, a society forgets the prototype and shifts to another one.

The Bar B Q ranch style of cooking came to be called barbecue: In the southern USA, it is to cook over an open flame and apply a sauce. Other places drop the requirement of the flame or of the sauce.

Bible: "Tell that fox...." Lion = metaphor of a courageous king; fox of a pretender.

MEANING

Denotation = referent in the real world. Ask: What is the set of possible referents? Its prototype and extensions?

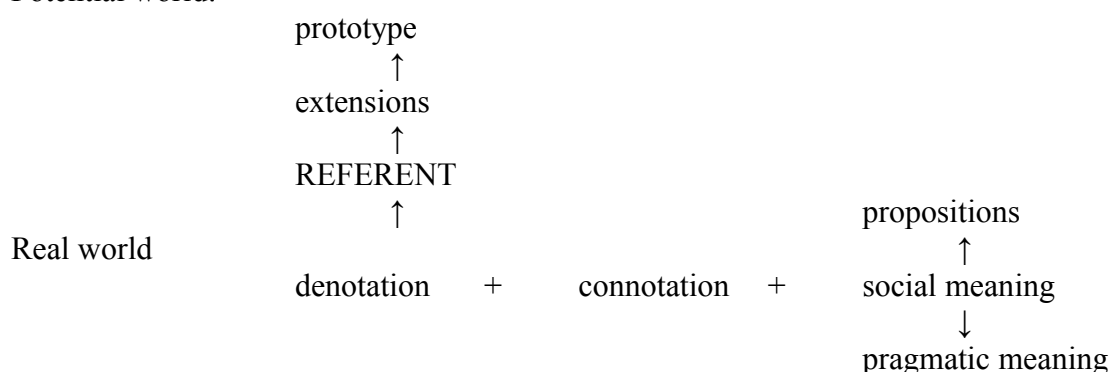
Connotation = evaluations and propositions about the referent.

Pragmatic = purpose of the referent.

Social = one's relationship to the referent.

LEXICAL MORPHEMES

Potential world:



GRAMMATICAL MORPHEMES

"This" has no denotation, only a contextual referent

"Of" has a function but no referent

Function = relationship between things, indicated by lexemes, word order or intonation.