

Introduction to Language

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This course serves as an introduction to **linguistics**, the scientific study of human languages.

My Goal: Take you on a journey through my field by discussing with you a broad range of topics within linguistics.

- How is human language organized?
- What are the building blocks of languages?
- How do languages vary** and how are all languages universally alike?
- How do linguists think the rules of a language's grammar work in people's minds?
- How and why do languages change?
- How does language use and people's accents/dialects interact with society?
- Why do babies have an amazing talent at learning languages while adults have a much harder time?

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How many human languages are spoken/signed in the world?

- a Less than 100
- b 100–500
- c 500–1,000
- d 1,000–5,000
- e 5,000–10,000
- f 10,000–25,000
- g More than 25,000

According to Ethnologue, a database that catalogues living languages, there are **7,105** languages spoken on earth!

Nearly 2,500 are dying or in trouble of dying.

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Language in Toronto

- Toronto is an incredible place for linguists to live!
- Perhaps the most **multilingual** city in the world.
 - "a mosaic of language." (City of Toronto, 2011 Census: Languages Report)
 - 49.1% of people within the city limits of Toronto are **native speakers** of a language other than English.

Definition: A **native speaker** of a language acquired the language as a child from a caregiver in a natural setting.



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Portuguese 58,175	Mandarin 59,820	Tamil 61,600	Tagalog 70,465	Other Chinese dialects 91,210
Gujarati 28,245	Greek 29,020	Korean 31,135	French 32,665	Persian (Farsi) 41,905
Ukrainian 15,640	German 16,785	Punjabi (Punjabi) 23,000	Vietnamese 23,575	Polish 27,885
American 5,650	Croatian 6,035	Japanese 6,230	Armenian 6,465	Hindi 12,955
Hebrew 4,415	Bulgarian 4,535	Malay 4,535	Indonesian 4,535	Hungarian 13,525
Arabic 26,075	Russian 36,950	Serbian 13,420	Somali 12,200	Dutch 3,575
Bengali 24,320	Other languages 36,650	Spanish 70,760	Turkish 7,860	Romanian 13,300
Malay 4,535	Indonesian 4,535	Arabic 26,075	Russian 36,950	Serbian 13,420
Hebrew 4,415	Bulgarian 4,535	Malay 4,535	Indonesian 4,535	Hungarian 13,525
American 5,650	Croatian 6,035	Japanese 6,230	Armenian 6,465	Hindi 12,955
Portuguese 58,175	Mandarin 59,820	Tamil 61,600	Tagalog 70,465	Other Chinese dialects 91,210

Language Myth

Myth: Linguists are people who learn a lot of languages.

Reality: Linguists learn a lot of things about languages, but our goal is not to become polyglots.

- Languages I can speak: **1**
 - English
- Languages I've researched: **15**
 - English, Icelandic, Faroese, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, German, Yiddish, Dutch, Italian, Inuktitut, Korean, Russian, Hebrew, and Tłı̨chǫ Yatıı

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What is a language?

"A language is a dialect with an army and a navy."

-Max Weinreich

Relationship between language and geo-political borders.

Two dialects are considered to be mutually intelligible when a speaker of one dialect can (by and large) understand the other, and vice versa.

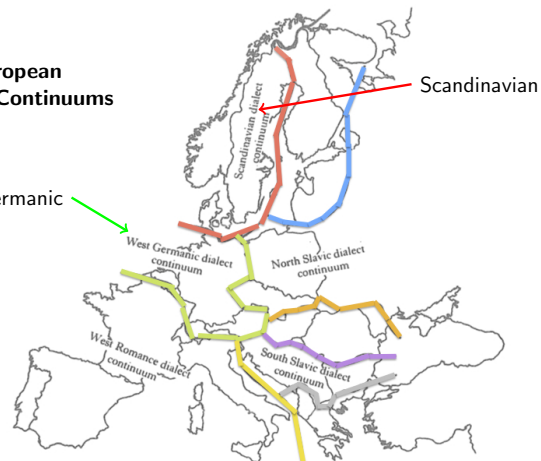
Definition: A **dialect continuum** is a range of dialects spoken across a continuous geographic space. Neighbouring dialects are quite similar to each other, but dialects on opposite ends might not be **mutually intelligible**.

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What is a language?

European Dialect Continuums

West Germanic



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What is a language?

- Scandinavian
- West Germanic



- (1)
- I går var det mus i badekaret
Yesterday were there mice in the-bathtub (Nor.)
 - I går var der mus i badekarret
Yesterday were there mice in the-bathtub (Dan.)
 - Igår var det möss i badkaret
Yesterday were there mice in the-bathtub (Swe.)
'Yesterday, there were mice in the bathtub'

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What is a language?

Danish? Swedish?

- This area was formerly part of Denmark.
- Now part of Sweden.
- Do they speak Danish or Swedish?

"As a result of war and conquest, the territory became part of Sweden, and it is reported that it was a matter of only forty years or so before those same dialects were, by general consent as it were, dialects of Swedish. The dialects themselves, of course, had not changed at all linguistically" (Chambers and Trudgill 1998:11)



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What is a language?

- Scandinavian
- West Germanic

- The dialects across the Netherlands and Germany have lots of variation.
- At the border, there is mutual intelligibility.



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What is a language?

- (2) **Ger:** Lieber ein Bauch vom Essen, als ein Rücken vom Schaffen.
Swa: Liabr en Ranza vom Essa als en Buckl vom Schaffa.
'Rather a round belly from eating well than a round back from working too hard.'
- (3) **Ger:** Mein Luftkissenfahrzeug ist voller Aale
LGr: Mien Lüchtpöukaan ist vull von sük aalen
Dut: Mijn lucht-kussenboot zit vol paling
'My hovercraft is full of eels!'

The distinction between a language and a dialect is fuzzy.

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But... what is **Language**?

All languages differ with respect to their inventory of sounds, vocabulary, word order, types of affixes etc, but they all have a common set of traits.

What makes a language "Language"?

- ▶ Used to communicate
- ▶ Arbitrary
- ▶ Hierarchically organized
- ▶ Produced and perceived
- ▶ Quintessentially human
- ▶ Genetically endowed
- ▶ A constrained but creative system

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Language is used to communicate

A language can be used to communicate intentions and concepts from one speaker's mind to another's.

- ▶ Human languages have **semanticity** or the ability to convey a meaning.
- ▶ Every language uses a system of **signs** that are associated with **meanings**.

Definition: A **sign** is a discrete unit of meaning.

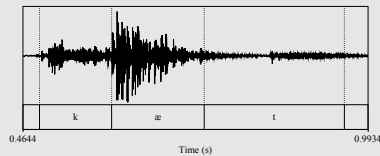
Definition: A **conventional sign** is a sign that all members of a language community (e.g., all English speakers) agree to use with a certain meaning.

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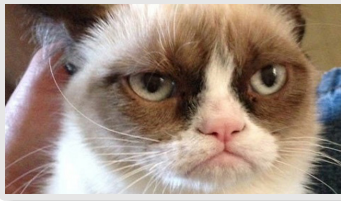
Language is used to communicate

a sign...

'cat'
/kæt/



with a meaning



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Signs are arbitrary

Other languages have a **different set** of conventional signs:

English:	<i>cat</i>
French:	<i>chat</i>
Russian:	<i>koshka</i>
Hawai'ian:	<i>pōpoki</i>
Finnish:	<i>kissa</i>
Innu:	<i>minush</i>
Mandarin:	<i>māo</i>
Japanese:	<i>neko</i>
Icelandic:	<i>köttur</i>

This is because the sign-meaning relation in human language is arbitrary.

- ▶ No intrinsic connection between a particular set of sounds and a particular meaning.

Minor exception: onomatopoeia. When a word sounds like the thing it means.

- ▶ Linguistically rare.

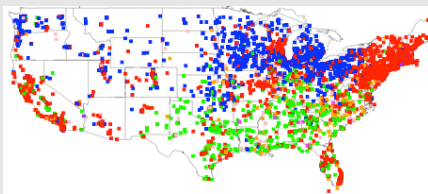
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Signs are arbitrary

Even different dialects of the same language have a different set of conventional signs.

What's the generic term for a sweetened carbonated beverage?

- a **pop**
- b **soda**
- c **soft drink**
- d **coke**
- e tonic
- f fizzy drink
- g other



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Signs are arbitrary

In English	Means	In
<i>chip</i>	'a house'	Korean
<i>peat</i>	'to drink'	Czech
<i>mug</i>	'seed'	Hungarian
<i>bin</i>	'son of'	Swahili

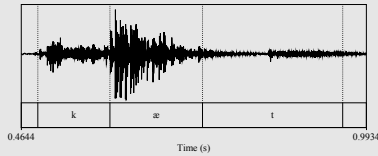
You may have noticed this when learning a language and used the similarities as mnemonics to help remember vocabulary...

'I like to **drink peaty** whiskey'

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Language is hierarchically organized

Speakers of a language encode what we want to say by turning their thoughts into a continuous linear sequence of discrete units.



Language is composed of discrete units that are assembled according to the rules of that language's **grammar**.

- ▶ All languages systematically 1) combine these discrete units to form larger units, 2) arrange units in a particular order, and 3) substitute units for each other.
- ▶ But you need to be a speaker of that language to get it.

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Language is hierarchically organized

Combining units to form larger units

- ▶ **Sounds:** There are individual sounds in a language, such as /k/, /t/, and /æ/.
- ▶ **Syllables:** Sounds combine into syllables. For example /kæt/, /tæk/, and /ækt/
- ▶ **Words:** Syllables combine to form words. Some are a single syllable (*cat*, *tack*, *act*) while others contain two or more syllables (*lin.guis.tics*, *ba.na.na*, *re.e.val.u.a.tion*)
- ▶ **Phrases:** Words combine into phrases. For example, the words *the*, *fat*, and *cat* can combine to form the phrase *the fat cat*.

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Language is hierarchically organized

...									...
the fat kitty									Phrases
the	fat			kitty					Words
ðə	fæt			kɪ	tɪ				Syllables
ð	ə	f	æ	t	k	ɪ	t	ɪ	Sounds

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Language is hierarchically organized

Combining units to form larger units

- ▶ **Sentences:** Phrases combine into sentences. The phrases *the fat cat*, *ate up* and *all the food* can combine into the sentence *the fat cat ate up all the food*.
- ▶ **Groups of sentences/discourse:** Sentences can combine with other sentences to create discourse. For example, we can combine the sentences *the cat chased the squirrel* and *she didn't catch it* in a few ways:
 - The cat chased the squirrel. She didn't catch it.
 - The cat chased the squirrel, but she didn't catch it.
 - The cat chased the squirrel, and she didn't catch it.

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Language is hierarchically organized

Ordering of units can change the meaning

- ▶ **Sounds relative to each other:** /it/ ('eat') does not mean the same as /ti/ ('tea')
- ▶ **Syllables relative to each other:** /wi.pi/ (weepee) doesn't mean the same as /pi.wi/ (pee-wee)
- ▶ **Words relative to each other:** *forest green* does not mean the same as *green forest*
- ▶ **Phrases relative to each other:** *The cat chased the squirrel* doesn't mean the same as *the squirrel chased the cat*
- ▶ **Sentences relative to each other:** *They bought a car and then they had an accident* doesn't mean the same as *They had an accident and then they bought a car*

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Language is hierarchically organized

Substituting units for each other can change the meaning

- ▶ **Substituting sounds:** Replace /k/ with /f/ and you go from *cat* to *fat*
- ▶ **Substituting syllables:** Replace /kræ/ with /hæ/ and you might go from feeling *crappy* to being *happy*
- ▶ **Substituting words:** Replacing *mosquito* with *shark* will be very bad news for John in the sentence *John got bite by a mosquito*.
- ▶ **Substituting phrases:** We can meet *on the beach* or *at the pub* but I only need a swimsuit in one case.
- ▶ **Substituting sentences:** *Close the window*, *Do you mind if I close the window*, and *It sure is cold in this house!* might all result in the window being closed but they have a range of subtly different connotations.

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Language is produced and perceived

Production

Language is produced using the human body.

- Speaking involves the lungs, vocal cords, oral cavity, nasal cavity, tongue, teeth, jaw, lips, and your even your uvula!
- Signed languages use faces, hands, arms, and torsos.

Perception

Language is perceived using the human body.

- We perceive speech as sound and our brains are able to make sense of that sound as speech.
- Vision also plays an important role in perception.

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Language is quintessentially human

- Other animals have communication systems (e.g., bee dances, bird songs).
 - These systems are limited to only a handful of messages that can be communicated (e.g., PREDATOR!, FOOD!, MATE?)

Language is perhaps the key feature separating humans from all other animals.

- The origin of human language (between 60 000 and 150 000 years ago) is associated with **the great leap forward** in human history.
 - The start of modern human history.

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Language is quintessentially human

Human language is different from other animal communication systems:

- Spatial and temporal displacement
 - Ability to talk about things other than the 'here and now'.
- Hierarchical structure
 - Ability to combine small discrete units into larger units.
- Productivity
 - Ability to identify categories to group meanings and to keep those categories open to receive new meanings
- Discrete infinity
 - Ability to combine words into an infinite number of new sentences/meanings.

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Language is genetic

All humans have the same, equal capacity for acquiring language.

- Children are so efficient at learning language that many believe that we are born with an innate Universal Grammar (UG)
 - A cognitive template of a language that we map sounds and structures on to through acquisition.
 - UG constrains the diversity of language.

Evidence

- First language acquisition is fast and easy.
 - From babbling at 6 months to using full sentences at age 3.
- Children go through the same series of steps when acquiring a language, no matter what the language is.
 - Including signed languages.
- Extraordinary similarity observed across all languages.
 - We'll see more of this throughout the class.

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Language is a creative system

Languages provide the freedom and ability to produce and understand new words and sentences as the need arises.

- There's always new things to say and new experiences to talk about.

But this creativity is constrained by a language's grammar

- **Rule-governed creativity**

Creating new words

- *prasp*
- *flib*
- *traf*
- **psapr*
- **bfli*
- **ftra*

Creating new sentences

- That green dog with a banana tattoo frightened the bald cat that chased the obese mouse.
- *Frightened dog with tattoo banana a green that the cat bald the mouse obese chased that.

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Linguistic Competence

The ability for speakers of languages to produce and perceive new words and sentences of a language and at the same time recognize words and sentences that are not acceptable words and sentences of that language is a special type of knowledge that linguists all **linguistic competence**.

- Our competence of the grammar of English allowed us to separate the acceptable from the unacceptable in the previous slide.

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What linguists mean by grammar

Definition: Linguists call "the mental system that allows human beings to form and interpret the sounds, words, and sentences of their language" a **grammar** (Grady et al. 2012).

Component	Domain
Phonetics	articulation and perception of speech sounds
Phonology	patterning and interaction of speech sounds
Morphology	word formation
Syntax	sentence formation
Semantics	interpretation of words and sentences
Pragmatics	interpretation of non-literal meanings

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What linguists mean by grammar

A linguist's grammar is not a book and it is not concerned with just the form of words and sentences. Rather it is an intricate system of knowledge that encompasses sound and meaning as well as form and structure. It contains the machinery needed to link a thought in the brain to movements of the tongue and lips, and vice versa—which, in the end, is what language is all about.

Grady et al. (2012:6)

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Studying languages' grammars is the core of linguistics

Five facts about grammars

- ▶ Generality
 - All languages have a grammar.
- ▶ Parity
 - All languages' grammars are equal.
- ▶ Universality
 - All grammars are alike in basic ways.
- ▶ Mutability
 - All grammars change over time.
- ▶ Inaccessibility
 - Grammatical knowledge/competence is subconscious.

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Generality: all languages have a grammar

- ▶ All languages and dialects have grammatical systems that govern the structure of sentences, the structure of words, permissible sound combinations etc.
 - Newfoundland English
 - "Derek bees happy." (=Derek is always happy)
 - "Derek is happy." (=Derek is happy right now)
 - African American Vernacular English
 - "Derek be happy." (=Derek is always happy)
 - "Derek happy." (=Derek is happy right now)
 - Walpiri (spoken in Australia)
 - Saw dogs two kangaroos several.
 - Kangaroos several saw dogs two.
 - Dogs two kangaroos several saw.
 - What English does with word order, Walpiri does with morphological inflections.
- ▶ Just because another language or dialect is different, doesn't mean that it lacks grammatical rules.

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Parity: all languages/dialects are equal

- ▶ There is no such thing as a 'primitive language'.
 - All languages are equally capable of expressing the full range of human experiences and ideas.
 - If a language needs new words to refer to new technology or ideas, it will either make up a word or borrow one from another language.
- ▶ There is no such thing as a 'good grammar' or a 'bad grammar'.
 - While some languages and dialects may be associated with less socio-economically powerful groups, this has no bearing on the grammar of the language or dialect.
 - Arbitrariness of prestige... think about English dialects that 'drop their r's' in words like *Londoner*, *New Yorker*

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Universality: all grammars are alike in basic ways

- ▶ All languages...
 - have more consonants (e.g., *p, t, k*) than vowels (e.g. *u, o, a*).
 - employ a finite set of sounds.
 - have nouns and verbs.
 - have pronouns (*I, me, you, her*).
 - employ hierarchical structures.
- ▶ There is a tendency for languages to use three basic word orders despite six logical possibilities.
 - Canadians like hockey. (Subject-Verb-Object)
 - Canadians hockey like. (Subject-Object-Verb)
 - Like Canadians hockey. (Verb-Subject-Object)
 - Like hockey Canadians. (Verb-Object-Subject)
 - Hockey like Canadians. (Object-Verb-Subject)
 - Hockey Canadians like. (Object-Subject-Verb)
- ▶ The last three orders are VERY rare cross-linguistically.

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Mutability: all grammars change over time.

- Modern English (1500–present)
 - “A man may fish with the worme that hath eate of a king, and eate of the fish that fedde of that worme.” (Hamlet, Shakespeare)
- Middle English (1066–1500)
 - “Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote, The droughte of March hath perced to the roote.” (Cantebury Tales, Chaucer)
- Old English (449–1066)
 - “Hordweard sōhte georne æfter grunde, wolde guman findan þone þe him on sweofote sære getēode.” (Beowulf)

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Inaccessability: grammatical knowledge is subconscious.

- We are not aware of the grammatical rules that govern our speech.
 - “Wendy saw her.”
 - Can this mean that the person that Wendy saw was Wendy?
 - Why not?
 - -ed
 - slipped [slipt]
 - buzzed [bʌzd]
 - hunted [hʌntəd]
 - flived [fliv...?]
- Being able to interpret sentences doesn't mean we know why sentences mean what they mean.
 - We know what sounds acceptable and what doesn't, but we aren't sure why we know!

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This is where linguists come in!

Linguistics uses an elaborate set of methods for studying language (and the capacity for language) systematically and scientifically.

- Our data typically come from three sources:
 1. **Corpora** of recorded, spontaneous, natural speech
 2. **Elicitation** of native speaker judgments about acceptable and non-acceptable expressions through a guided interview.
 3. **Experimentation** conducted in a controlled laboratory setting, measuring aspects of production, perception, and brain function.
- Linguists describe and study language as it is **actually spoken by people**.
- Linguists are interested in *all human languages and dialects* not just standard dialects.
 - Something might be acceptable in one dialect, but not another dialect.

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Prescriptivism vs. Descriptivism

Many grammarians (past and present) advocate that there are certain “educated” and/or “correct” ways of speaking a language which all speakers should adopt.

For English, they propose rules such as:

- Don't end sentences with a preposition:
 - *Who are you talking to?*
- Don't split infinitives
 - **To** boldly **go** where no one has gone before.
- Two negatives make a positive so don't use double negatives.
 - I **don't** have **none**.

These are **prescriptive rules**; telling people how others believe they should speak.

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Prescriptivism vs. Descriptivism

Many of the prescriptive rules advocated by purists are arbitrary and ill-formed.

- While prescriptivists will say that “double negatives” are illogical and must be avoided, many languages require two negative elements in certain constructions.

No comí nada. (Spanish)
not I-ate nothing.
'I didn't eat anything'
- Speakers of English have been stranding prepositions for hundreds of years, both in speech and even in the greatest of English literature.
 - “What's he got to do with the case?” asked the man he had spoken **with**. (A Tale of Two Cities, Dickens, 1859)
 - “This is something **up with** which I will not put.” (Churchill)

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Prescriptivism vs. Descriptivism

Linguistics is a **descriptive** approach to language.

- Linguists describe the way people actually use their language.
- The generalizations and theories proposed by linguists describe and model the unconscious knowledge of speakers.

An example of a descriptive approach to language:

- In some British dialects of English, speakers can invert the matrix verb *have* to create a question.
 - *You have the time* → *Have you the time?*
- In other dialects (like Canadian English), speakers must insert “do” to make a question.
 - *You have the time* → *Do you have the time?*

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Prescriptivism vs. Descriptivism

I'm done my homework

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Prescriptivism vs. Descriptivism

	Tor.	Phila.	Verm.	Mont.	LI
I'm done	✓	✓	✓	*	✓
I'm done my homework	✓	✓	✓	*	*
I'm done with my homework	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
I've done my homework	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

A descriptive approach

The *be done (+ noun phrase)* construction is acceptable in several dialects of English, including the English spoken in Toronto, Philadelphia, and Vermont but the construction is unacceptable to speakers of English in Montreal and Long Island. Montreal and Long Island differ with respect to how acceptable *be done* is without a following noun phrase.

- ▶ We can start to formulate hypotheses about the grammars of speakers of different dialects that allow the construction in one dialect but not another.
 - This might lead us to ask other questions, get more data, and test more hypotheses: **The scientific method.**

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Standard vs. non-standard

- ▶ No grammar/dialect/language is right or wrong
- ▶ However, some rules advocated by prescriptivists are based on a **standard** or **prestige** dialect.
- ▶ Countries, provinces, territories, and institutions might adopt a certain dialect as the **standard**.
 - There's nothing inherently superior about a standard dialect or inferior about non-standard dialects.
 - **Remember:** Each dialect has a grammar of its own and speakers of those dialects follow those rules.
 - Every grammar is equal.

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Standard vs. non-standard

- ▶ Social and political, not linguistic, reasons why one dialect is considered standard while another is not.
 - Standard dialects are usually based on the speech of the capital city, the political elite, or the upper-class... "The Queen's English".
 - The features of a standard or non-standard dialect are entirely arbitrary.
 - **Remember:** dropping *r*'s

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Standard vs. non-standard

- Doug saw himself in the mirror.
- Doug seen hisself in the mirror.

The two sentences **convey the same meaning** but:

- ▶ a. is considered to be standard and is associated with middle-class, educated or formal speech.
- ▶ b. is considered to be non-standard and is associated with working class, less educated, or informal (vernacular) speech.

These social meanings are evoked without regard to linguistic content.

- ▶ As response to a question, b. is no less accurate than a.
- ▶ As an observation, b. is no less true than a.

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Standard vs. non-standard

- ▶ Language is an **arbitrary** system.
- ▶ No linguistic principle can predict what's standard or non-standard, only social convention.

Possessive	Reflexive
my	myself
your	yourself
her	herself
his	himself
our	ourselves
your	yourselves
their	themselves

If standard dialects were based on logic, why don't we have **hisself** and **theirselves**?

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Standard vs. non-standard

- Why have a standard dialect?
 - When local dialects are **mutually unintelligible**.
 - Standard is used to communicate with speakers of other dialects.
 - Arabic, German
 - Standard variety is often used for certain registers, such as writing.
 - Using a non-standard dialect might detract from your arguments if someone who doesn't speak that dialect is reading.
- BUT using a non-standard dialect signals authenticity... it would be weird to have someone speaking like the Queen DJing in a club.
 - There's an appropriate place for the standard and the non-standard.

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Formal vs. informal

- Prescriptive rules also target informal speech.
- Most (if not all) languages have ways of expressing formality and familiarity in their grammars.
- Like non-standard dialects, informal speech is not incorrect, it just has a different usage from formal speech... **it's still grammatically acceptable**.
 - *Goin' to the store, eh?* (informal and grammatically acceptable)
 - **The store to eh goin'?* (grammatically unacceptable)

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Grammatical vs. ungrammatical

So far today I've made a distinction between acceptable and not acceptable sentences/words/sound combinations.

- From now on, I'll also use the terms **grammatical** and **ungrammatical** interchangeably with acceptable and not acceptable.
- As we've seen earlier, we use an asterisk (*) to mark ungrammatical forms
 - **The pilot arrived the passengers.*
 - **Which does he like car?*
- Grammaticality, in the technical linguistic sense that we're using in this course, is **judged with respect to a particular speaker or dialect**.
 - Certain combinations that are ungrammatical in one dialect/language may be perfectly grammatical in another dialect/language.

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Grammatical vs. ungrammatical

- Note that grammaticality is **not** based on:
 - **Truth**: or else we could never lie.
 - **Reality**: because we can talk about things that don't exist like unicorns.
 - **Meaningfulness**: because we can say nonsensical but grammatical sentences
 - *Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.*
 - **Green sleep ideas colourless furiously.*

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Competence vs. Performance

- We must also distinguish between competence and performance.

Definition: Competence is a speaker's tacit knowledge of their language.

Definition: Performance is a speaker's actual use of language in real situations.

- Real-world communication is filled with slips of the tongue, false starts, pauses, stuttering etc.
- Being tired or intoxicated can effect our speech.
- These are all **performance** errors and don't reflect our underlying knowledge of our language.
 - Linguists are primarily concerned with **competence** but we sometimes use data from performance to get at a speaker's underlying competence.

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The major topics in this course

- Phonetics: the study of how we produce and perceive sounds in language.
 - How do we articulate speech sounds?
 - What types of sounds are used cross-linguistically?
 - How do sounds differ acoustically?
- Phonology: the study of how sounds are categorized and interact?
 - How do sounds affect each other?
 - What kinds of alternations do exist cross-linguistically?
 - How do syllables, stress, and intonation differ cross-linguistically?
- Morphology: the study of word formation and structure
 - What are the rules for combining affixes to create new words?
 - What other types of morphological processes exist?
 - Why are some words ambiguous in meaning (e.g., *unlockable*)

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The major topics in this course

Syntax: the study of sentence formation and structure

- What is the structure of English sentences?
- How do different languages put words together to make sentences?
- Why can a sentence be infinitely long?

Semantics: (and Pragmatics) the study of meaning

- Why are some sentences ambiguous?
- How do we model the meaning of words and sentences?
- How can you say one thing but mean something else?

Language Acquisition: the study of how we learn to speak languages.

- How do children acquire language so quickly?
- Why are adults not able to acquire languages as well as children?

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The major topics in this course

Historical linguistics: the study of language change

- How do properties of a language change over time?
- How are languages "genetically" related?

Sociolinguistics: the study of the intersection between language and society.

- How do dialects of English vary?
- Why do we have multiple options for saying the same thing and what does it mean to use one over another?

Languages of Canada: a look at the diversity of aboriginal languages of Canada

- How do aboriginal languages differ from English and each other?
- What efforts are being made to revitalize languages that are in danger of extinction?

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Other themes

Linguistic Mythbusting

There are a LOT of myths out there about language. I plan to bust a whole bunch throughout the course.

Linguistic Diversity

The languages of the world are incredibly diverse! Each class I'll highlight a few languages that do something with their grammar that is remarkably different from English!

Tickets out the door

At the end of many lectures, I will ask you to write a short response to a question. You'll have to hand it back to me before you leave, and sign a class list.

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What you can expect from me

I'm here for you, to help you learn, first and foremost.

I will try my best to...

- Be clear and clarify whenever you ask me to.
- Answer your questions!
 - Either immediately or in the next lecture.
- Design assignments and exercises with a purpose.
- Be available.
 - I love office hours!
- Have fun!
 - If you're engaged, you're far more likely to learn.
- Respect you, your ideas, your opinions, and your time.

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What I expect from you

You're all here to learn, first and foremost.

I want you to...

- Attend lecture and tutorial.
- Read the text and do the assignments exercises.
- Take responsibility for your own learning.
 - If you don't understand something, let me know!
- Pay attention.
 - Keep texting to a bare minimum.
 - Use your computer as a learning tool.
- Participate.
 - Giving me a thumbs up/down signals to me you're engaged.
- Have respect for me, your TAs, and your colleagues.

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For Next Week...

1. Go to tutorial!

Time	Tutorial	Place	TA
Tues. 5pm	T5101	SS 1086	Tomo
	T5102	LM 157	Christopher
	T5103	RW 142	Élodie
Tues. 6pm	T5201	SS 1088	Tomo
	T5202	RW 143	Kaz
	T5203	RW 229	Ross
	T5204	SS 1070	Emily
	T5205	RW 142	Élodie

2. Complete short assignment 1 and hand it in to your TA in tutorial.

3. Read chapters 1 & 2 (about today's topics) and chapter 3 (for next week)

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