

Structure and meaning

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Introductions

- Who am I?
- What is this module about?
- How is it going to run?

Overview

- 1 The problem of language structure
- 2 Foundations
- 3 Structure in words
- 4 Structure in sentences

- Hockett's 'How to speak Martian'
- Hockett's 'Language Design Features'
- Jean Berko's 'The child's learning of English Morphology'
- Morphology tree videos
- Caroline Heycock's generative syntax videos

The problem of language structure

- How would a Martian figure it out?
- 'John [did] go to the shop'
- Auxiliary verbs such as 'did' always come after the first word in a sentence

The problem of language structure

- But what about...
- 'The man with the hat [did] go to the shop'
- We can't have 'The [did] man with the hat go to the shop'
- So how do we solve this problem?

How do we solve this problem?

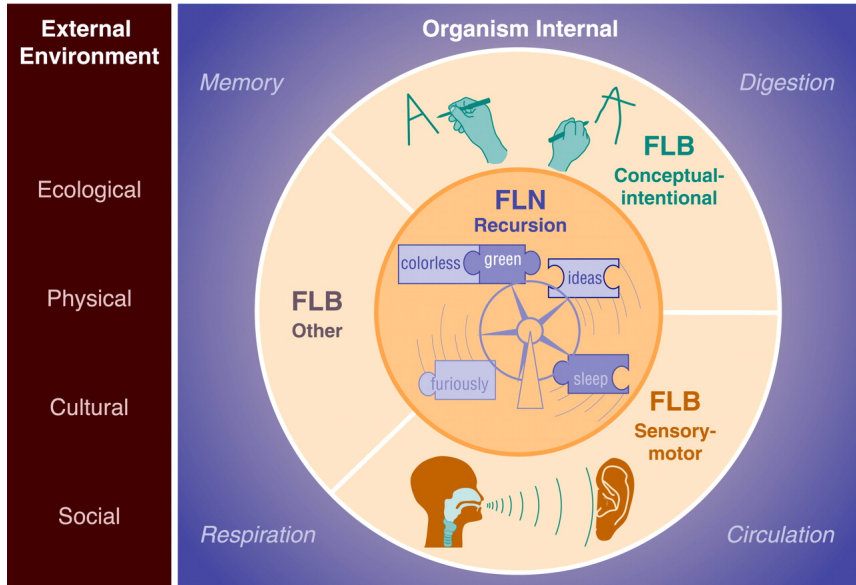
- A scientific theory of language
- Analytic philosophy
- Breaking language down into its smallest units of meaning...
- And building it back up again

- Our intuitions are useful
- We know what sounds right, but we need to figure out why
- And when we say 'right' we mean what sounds right, not what we are told is right by dusty old grammar books...

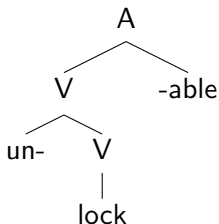
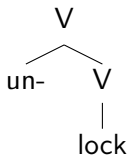
Where is language?

- I-language: the capabilities human beings have to construct linguistic structures in the brain (competence)
- E-language: the externalisation of language (e.g. things that speakers say, also known as utterances/performance)

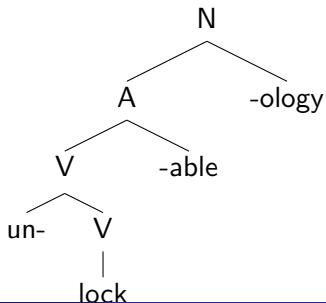
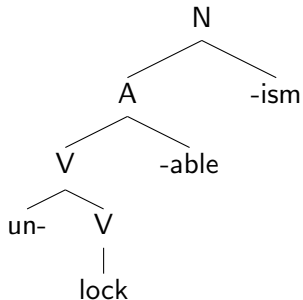
What is language?




Morphology and meaning



Morphology and meaning



Syntax and meaning

 Hauser, M. D., Chomsky, N. & Fitch, W. T. (2002), 'The faculty of language: what is it, who has it, and how did it evolve?', *science* **298**(5598), 1569–1579.