

Introduction to English Language and Linguistics – Reader

Chapter 1: What is language?.....	2
Chapter 2: Phonetics and Phonology	6
Chapter 3: Morphology	18
Chapter 4: Syntax	23
Chapter 5: Semantics.....	28
Chapter 6: Pragmatics	37
Chapter 7: Discourse Analysis	42
Chapter 8: Sociolinguistics.....	45
Chapter 9: Historical Linguistics and History of English	48

General Reading Material

Finegan, Edward (2004). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Kortmann, Bernd (2005). *English Linguistics: Essentials*. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag.

Yule, George (2006). *The Study of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chapter 1: What is language?

by Susan Dostert

The term 'language' can be used to refer to a variety of concepts / things, such as "the particular form of words and speech used by the people of a country, area or social group", or "the method of human communication using spoken or written words". In other words, we can talk about a specific language e.g. English, German, Swahili etc. or about language as such. In linguistics, we are interested in both of these fields, whereby General Linguistics will tend to concentrate on the latter topic and the individual language departments on their specific language e.g. English linguistics. A further meaning of 'language' is "the style or types of words used by a person or group", which is a topic generally studied within sociolinguistics.

Language as a form of human communication

Most linguists would probably agree that although many animals are able to communicate, they do not actually have 'language' in the sense that humans do. Birds may sing, cats miaow and purr, dogs bark and growl, apes grunt, scream and even chatter, but they are not assumed to be using these sounds in the way we do. 'Language' is therefore a major attribute distinguishing us from the rest of the animal kingdom.

Yule's 5 characteristics of human language

Displacement

This is the ability to use language to talk about times, places and people other than the 'here and now'. It also enables us to say things which we know to be false i.e. to lie. Bees are said to be able to convey some of this information in their 'dance' which they employ to pass on information about food sources.

Arbitrariness

This means that there is generally no natural, inherent relationship between the signs (i.e. sounds or letters) we produce and their meaning. For this reason different languages can use different signs to refer to one and the same thing e.g. a *flower* in English is a *Blume* in German or a *fleur* in French. Occasionally we find examples of **iconicity**, where someone has tried to overtly create a resemblance between the sign and its meaning.

Examples:

small

tall

fat

When language tries to mirror or 'echo' the sounds made by animals and objects this is called **onomatop(o)eia**.

Examples:

cuckoo

squelch

ticktock

Arbitrariness also enables languages to evolve, both in the sense that existing signs can come to mean new things (e.g. *pen* which used to refer to a quill), but also that new signs can be introduced for existing things. Animal languages, in contrast, are more likely to have **fixed reference** i.e. a certain sign has a specific and fixed meaning.

Productivity

This is an important characteristic of human language allowing us to continuously create new utterances, combining the ‘building bricks’ of language in ever new ways, whether these be sounds, words or sentences. Human languages are therefore continually evolving.

Cultural Transmission

This refers to how languages are acquired by our children. The assumption is that there is no genetic component (although Noam Chomsky challenges this with his theory of Universal Grammar) which would enable a child to simply start speaking e.g. English at a certain age, but rather that children need to be exposed to a language (and culture) in order to acquire it. This means, for example, that a child born in Korea to Korean parents but then adopted by French parents in France will tend to grow up speaking French as his/her first language and not Korean (unless the French parents make sure the child is also exposed to Korean). Many animals, however, do seem to pass the ability to communicate on to their offspring genetically e.g. dogs will bark even if they have never heard another dog.

Duality

Duality (or ‘**double articulation**’) refers to two separate layers of language working together to provide us with a pool of sounds which we can combine to communicate with one another. On the one hand, we have a limited number of **discrete sounds** (e.g. the 44 phonemes in English) which in isolation have no inherent meaning e.g. *b*, *i*, or *n*. On the other hand, we have a virtually unlimited number of distinct meanings which we can create by combining these sounds in certain ways e.g. *bin*, or *nib*. Various other combinations such as **bni* are not meaningful in English, but could possibly be in other languages.

Other features of human language

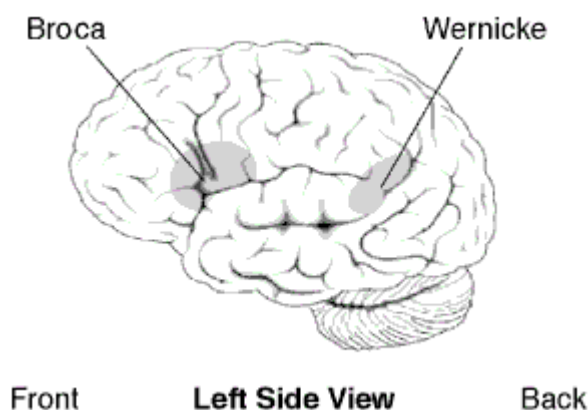
A further feature of human language is **reflexiveness**, which means that we are able to use the language to talk about language – which is typically what linguists do. **Discreteness** is also something that is said to distinguish human languages from other forms of animal communication. It means that the sounds of a language differ sufficiently from one another for a (native) speaker to distinguish them and thereby know which sign with which meaning is being used at any one time.

Language and the brain

Language is a cognitive skill and one therefore whose roots are situated in the evolution of the brain. We do not know exactly when our ancestors began to speak (estimates vary from 30,000 – 100,000 years ago), or even what triggered them to do so, but once they started,

there was no stopping them. From such humble beginnings the 5,000 – 6,000 languages we assume to exist today have evolved.

Research mainly on **language aphasia** has been able to show that there are two major areas of the brain specialised in language processing, production and comprehension: **Broca's** and **Wernicke's areas**, situated in the left hemisphere and named after the two physicians who first discovered them in the 19th century.



What is linguistics?

Linguistics is the science of language(s). It is generally a **descriptive** discipline rather than a **prescriptive** one, which means that linguists do not lay down hard and fast rules about how to use a certain language, but rather concentrate on describing the rules which (especially native) speakers seem to have internalised. Apart from this, there are various different ways of 'doing' linguistics. For example, we can concentrate on language as used at a certain point of time e.g. in 1989; this is called **synchronic** linguistics. Alternatively, we can look at language from a **diachronic** point of view, which involves analysing the development of a language during a certain period of time e.g. during Middle English, or in the 1950s etc. Linguistics is a science which can either be studied in a **theoretical** or a more **applied** way. For example, someone may be interested in finding out exactly how questions are formed in English (= theoretical). Once this is known the knowledge could be applied e.g. to language teaching, thereby (hopefully) enabling teachers and pupils to learn the language more effectively.

Reading

Yule, George (2006). *The Study of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1-2

Kortmann, Bernd (2005). *English Linguistics: Essentials*. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag. Ch. 1.

Finegan, Edward (2004). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. Ch. 1.

Advanced reading

Bauer, Laurie & Trudgill, Peter (Eds.). (1998). *Language Myths*. London: Penguin.

- Herrmann, Christoph & Fiebach, Christian (2004). *Gehirn & Sprache*. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer.
- Pinker, Steven (1994). *The Language Instinct*. London: Penguin.

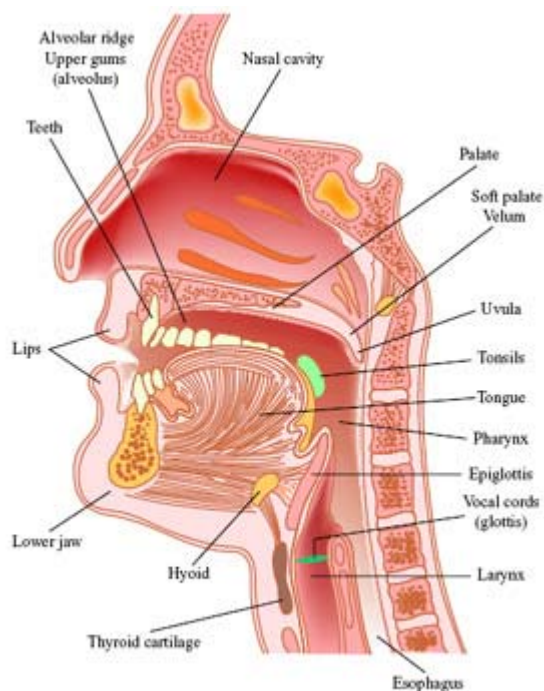
Chapter 2: Phonetics and Phonology

by Heidrun Dorgeloh

The two primary linguistic disciplines concerned with speech sounds - those sounds that are used by humans to communicate - are phonetics and phonology. Both areas are mutually dependent. Phonetics describes the concrete, physical **form of sounds** (how they are produced, heard and how they can be described), while phonology is concerned with the **function of sounds**, that is with their status and inventory in any given language.

Phones and Phonetics

The two basic tasks of phonetics are the **transcription** and the **classification** of sounds, also called **phones** in this context. The phone is therefore the basic unit of phonetics and it refers to the concrete sound substance as such. In the area of **articulatory phonetics** this substance is described on the basis of the **articulatory properties**. These refer to the human **vocal tract** (or to the speech organs), illustrated below, and are used to describe and classify sounds. By contrast, **acoustic** and **auditory phonetics** deal with the characteristics of sound waves and how they are perceived by the human ear.

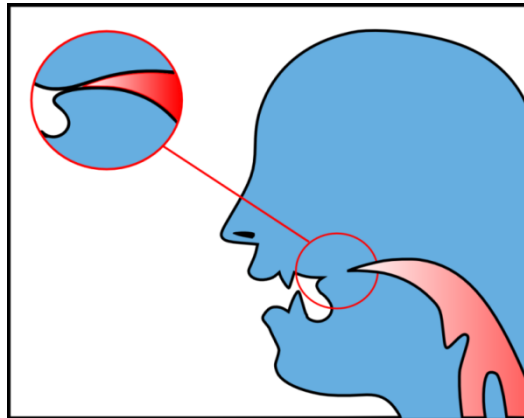


Phones are represented by placing brackets around the transcription ([da:ns]/[dæns] for *dance* in British and American English)). The usefulness of a **transcription** system (a phonetic alphabet) is particularly plausible in a language such as English, where pronunciation and spelling often diverge substantially (cp. *see* – *sea* on the one hand, and *through* and *though*, on the other). There are various transcription models, such as the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet); for the transcription of English, several, slightly differing systems have evolved, all of them following in some way the original model of the phonetician **Daniel Jones**.

Classification of sounds

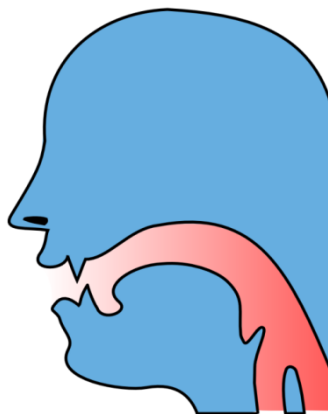
Traditionally, sounds are classified into **consonants** and **vowels**. **Consonants** are sounds that are produced with a major obstruction in the mouth cavity. For example, in the case of [t] (Fig. 1), there is direct contact between the tip of the tongue (active articulator) and the alveolar ridge (passive articulator), so that the airflow coming from the lungs can leave the mouth cavity only when the obstruction is removed:

Fig. 1. consonant [t]



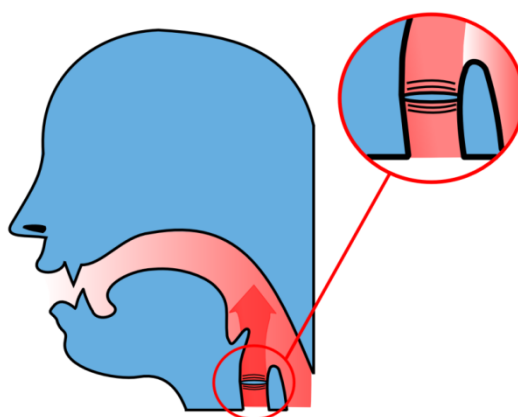
Vowels are sounds that are produced without such obstruction. For example, in the case of [i:] (Fig. 2), there is a gap within the mouth that is determined by the position of the tongue, and the airflow can escape relatively freely:

Fig. 2. vowel [i:]



Another difference between consonants and vowels is that vowels are generally voiced, i.e. the vocal cords are set vibrating by the outgoing airflow. Consonants, by contrast, can be voiced or voiceless: The vocal cords are either far apart and do not vibrate, as in *fan*, or they are relatively closed and vibrate as in *van* (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Voiceless and voiced sounds



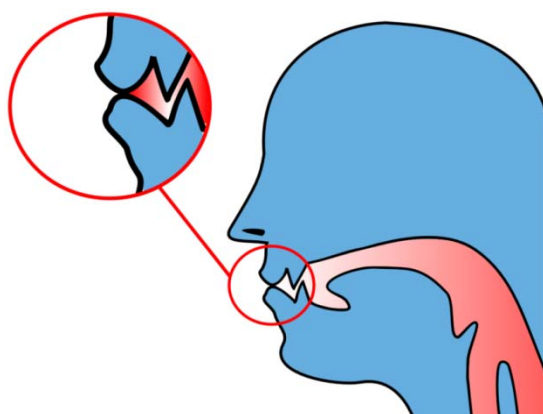
Classification of consonants

Factors relevant for the classification of consonants include the **manner of articulation**, the **place of articulation**, and **voicing**. With regard to the manner of articulation, English consonants can be classified into **plosives**, **fricatives**, **affricates**, **nasals**, **liquids**, and **semi-vowels**.

Plosives are consonants that are made up by completely blocking the airflow. The production of plosives involves three stages: 1) a direct contact between the active and the passive articulator forming a complete obstruction to the airflow; 2) the compression of air behind the obstruction; and 3) the release of the compressed air in the form of an “explosion” (hence the term *plosive*). There are six plosives in English: **bilabial** [p] and [b], **alveolar** [t] and [d], and **velar** [k] and [g].

Bilabial plosives [p] and [b] are produced with both lips pressed together. The active articulator is the lower lip; the passive articulator is the upper lip. The soft palate is raised and the air coming into the mouth stops for some time and then breaks the obstruction with a slight explosion. In the case of [b], the vocal cords are vibrating:

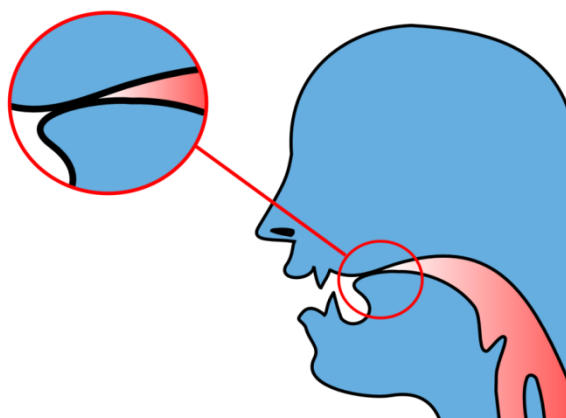
Fig. 4. bilabial plosives [p] and [b]



Alveolar plosives [t] and [d] are produced with the tip of the tongue firmly pressed against the (middle part of the) alveolar ridge. The active articulator is the tip of the tongue; the passive articulator is the alveolar ridge. The tip of the tongue makes firm contact with the

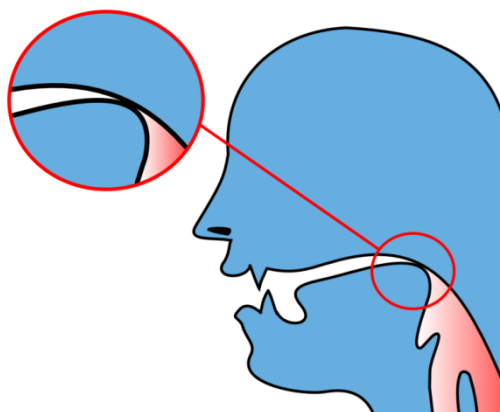
alveolar ridge. The air is trapped for a short time and then breaks the obstruction with a slight explosion. In the case of [d], the vocal cords are vibrating:

Fig. 5. alveolar plosives [t] and [d]



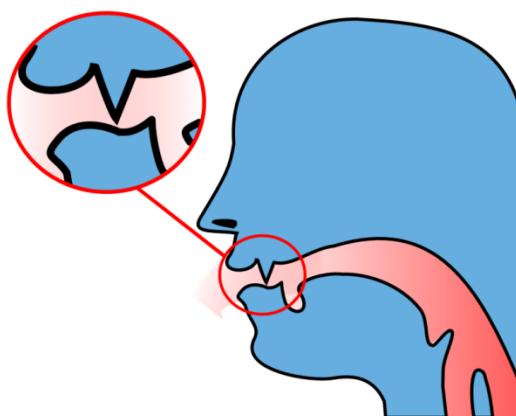
Velar plosives [k] and [g] are articulated with the back of the tongue against the soft palate. The active articulator is the back of the tongue; the passive articulator is the soft palate. The back of the tongue makes firm contact with the soft palate. The air is trapped for a short time and then breaks the obstruction with a slight explosion. In the case of [g], the vocal cords are vibrating:

Fig. 6. velar plosives [k] and [g]



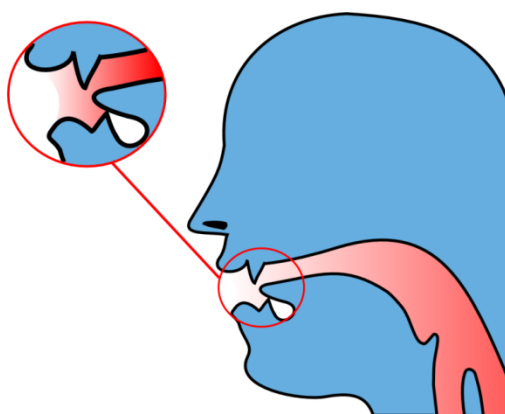
Fricatives are consonants that are produced by impeding, but not completely blocking the airflow, i.e., there is a narrow gap between the active and the passive articulator along which the airflow can leave the oral cavity. There are nine fricatives in English: **labio-dental** [f] and [v], **interdental** [θ] and [ð], **alveolar** [s] and [z], **palate-alveolar** [ʃ] and [ʒ], and **glottal** [h].

Fig. 7. labio-dental fricatives [f] and [v]



The lower lip is very close to the edge of the upper front teeth, thus forming an incomplete obstruction. When the air goes through the narrowing it causes slight friction (hence the term *fricative*). For [f] the vocal cords do not vibrate; there may be some vibration accompanying [v] when it occurs in word initial position as in e.g. *vast* or between vowels as in e.g. *never*.

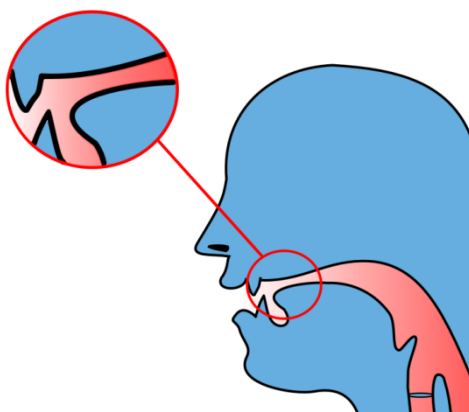
Fig. 8. interdental fricatives [θ] and [ð]



The tip of the tongue is either close to the edge of the upper teeth or slightly projected between the teeth. For [θ] the friction is as strong as for [f], for [ð] it is gentler. For [θ] the vocal cords do not vibrate; they vibrate for [ð] when it occurs in word initial position, before a vowel or in intervocalic positions. E.g. *that*, *rather*, etc.

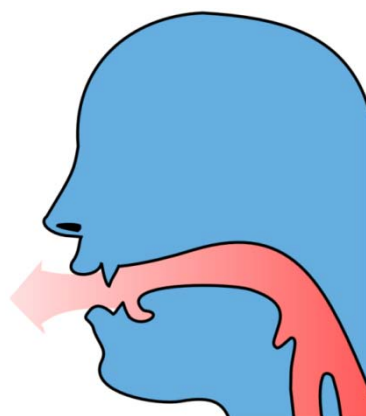
Other fricatives are produced with different places of articulation: For the alveolar fricatives [s] and [z], the tip of the tongue is close to the alveolar ridge. The teeth are very close together. The friction for [s] is strong, even stronger than for [θ]. For [s] the vocal cords do not vibrate; they vibrate for [z] when it occurs before vowels or in intervocalic positions. E.g. *zone*, *easy*, etc.

Fig. 9. alveolar and palate-alveolar fricatives [s], [z], [ʃ] and [ʒ]



For [ʃ] and [ʒ], the tip of the tongue is close to the back part of the alveolar ridge forming a flat narrowing. The front part of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate forming the front secondary focus. The friction for [ʃ] is strong, stronger than for [f] and [θ]. For [ʃ] the vocal cords do not vibrate; they vibrate for [ʒ] when it occurs before vowels. E.g. *pleasure*, etc.

Fig. 10. glottal fricative [h]

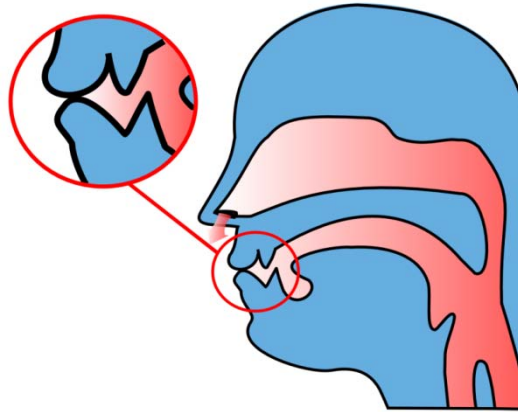


It is produced with the voiceless expulsion of air from the lungs with the mouth and tongue already in position for the following vowel.

Affricates are sounds that are similar to both plosives and fricatives: The tip of the tongue touches the back part of the teeth ridge, the front part of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate. The air is trapped for a short time because of a complete obstruction between the tip of the tongue and the teeth ridge, then the obstruction is released slowly and the friction is heard. The voiceless affricate is [tʃ] as in *chain*, whereas [dʒ], as in *jelly*, is voiced.

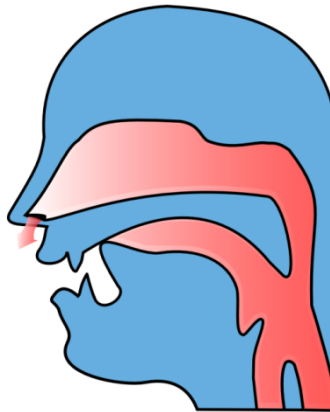
Nasals are consonants which, like plosives, are produced by completely blocking the airstream. But there is an important difference: The airflow escapes through the nasal cavity (hence the term *nasals*). There are three nasal consonants in English: bilabial [m], alveolar [n], and velar [ŋ]:

Fig. 11. bilabial nasal [m]



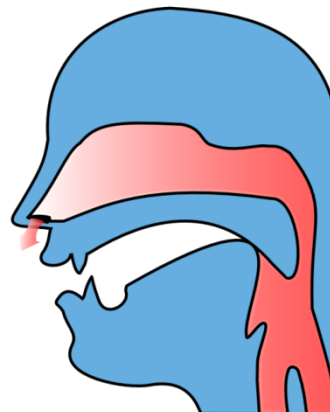
The lips are firmly kept together forming the complete obstruction. The active articulator is the lower lip; the passive articulator is the upper lip. The soft palate is lowered and the air escapes through the nasal cavity. The vocal cords are vibrating.

Fig. 12. alveolar nasal [n]



The tip of the tongue is pressed against the alveolar ridge forming the complete obstruction. The active articulator is the tip of the tongue, and the passive articulator is the alveolar ridge. The soft palate is lowered and the air escapes through the nasal cavity. The vocal cords are vibrating.

Fig. 13. velar nasal [ŋ]

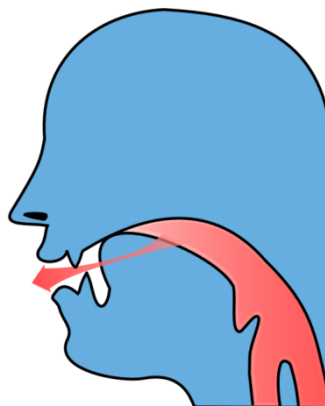


The back of the tongue is pressed to the soft palate forming the complete obstruction. The active articulator is the back of the tongue, and the passive articulator is the soft palate. The

soft palate is lowered and the air escapes through the nasal cavity. The vocal cords are vibrating.

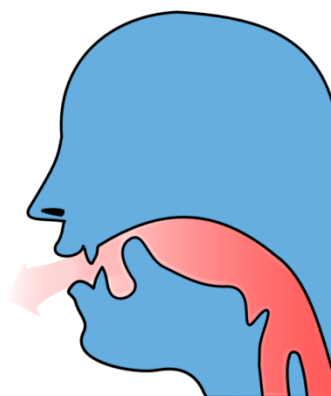
Liquids include alveolar [l] and post-alveolar [r].

Fig. 14. alveolar [l]



The tip of the tongue is in firm contact with the alveolar ridge forming the complete obstruction. The active articulator is the tip of the tongue, and the passive articulator is the alveolar ridge. The sides of the tongue are lowered and the air can pass between them. The vocal cords are brought together and are vibrating.

Fig. 15. post-alveolar [r]



The tip of the tongue is held in a position near to but not touching the back part of the alveolar ridge. The soft palate is raised and the air flows quietly between the tip of the tongue and the hard palate. The front part of the tongue is low and the back is rather high so that the tongue has a curved shape. The vocal cords are vibrating.

Semi-glides or **glides** include bilabial [w] and palatal [j]: [w], as in *why*, starts out with the lips firmly rounded, these articulators then moving away (= gliding) from the narrowing in the mouth. When articulating [j], as in *you*, the front part of the tongue is first raised towards the hard palate, then the soft palate is raised and the air goes along the central part of the tongue. The vocal cords are kept together and are vibrating.

The reason why these sounds are called semi-vowels is thus their manner of articulation: Like true vowels, semi-vowels are produced without a major obstruction, i.e., there is a wide gap between the active and the passive articulator, so that the airflow can escape relatively freely

from the mouth. However, unlike true vowels, semi-vowels never form the nucleus of a syllable (e.g., *week*, *yellow*) and are therefore usually considered consonants.

Classification of vowels

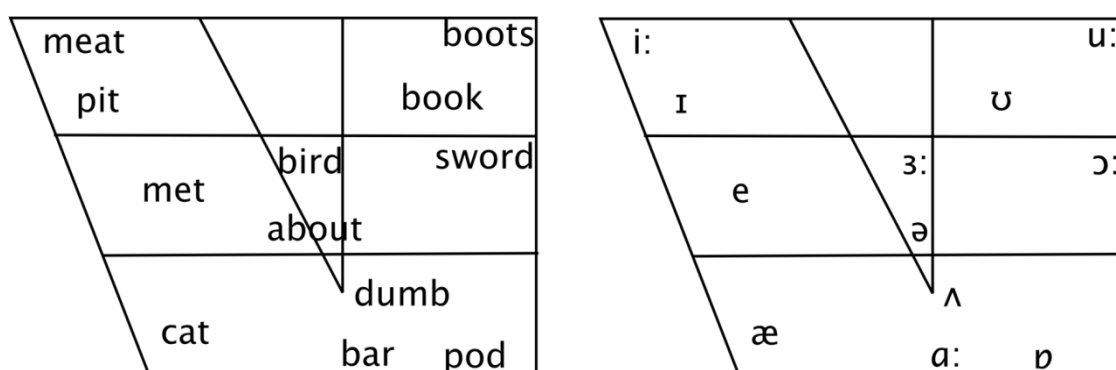
Depending on the height of the tongue, vowels can be classified into **high**, **low**, and **mid** vowels:

- 1) When the front or the back of the tongue is raised towards the roof of the mouth, the vowel is called **high**, this is the case, e.g., in *pill*, *meet*, *look*, or *soon*.
- 2) When the front or the back of the tongue is as low as possible, the vowel is called **low**, as, e.g., in *land*, *star*, or *dog*.
- 3) When the tongue occupies the position intermediate between the high and the low one, the vowel is called **mid**, e.g. in *get*, or the unstressed [ə] in *about*.

Depending on the part of the tongue that is raised most vowels are classified into **front**, **back**, and **central** vowels:

- 1) When the front part of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate, the vowel is called **front**, e.g. in *meet*, *get*, or *land*.
- 2) When the back part of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate, the vowel is called **back**, as in *star*, *dog*, *law*, or *soon*.
- 3) When the front part of the tongue is raised towards the back part of the hard palate, the vowel is called **central**, e.g. in *about*, *much*, or *nurse*.

These high-low and front-back dimensions of vowel articulation are also referred to as vowel **quality**. To illustrate how the articulatory properties of vowels relate to each other, a **vowel chart** is commonly used as a reference system. The chart below (adapted from Kortmann (2006: 68)) describes the basic vowel qualities of most standard varieties of English together with their phonetic transcription.



As can be seen from this chart, some vowels do not only differ qualitatively, but also **quantitatively** (as indicated by the colon as the **diacritic** for length). Long as opposed to short vowels also differ by being **tense** as opposed to **lax**:

- 1) **Tense** vowels are produced with a deliberate, accurate, maximally distinct gesture that involves considerable muscular effort. Tense vowels are either **long** vowels (e.g. [i:] in *meet*) or **diphthongs** (e.g. [eɪ] in *say*).

2) **Non-tense** (or **lax**) vowels are produced rapidly and are therefore short (e.g. [ɪ] in *pill*).

Diphthongs

The vowels described so far have all been monophthongs, in contrast to the diphthongs (or gliding vowels), where the tongue moves from one position to another. Examples can be found in *day*, *fight*, *oil*, *so*, and *now* for the so-called **closing diphthongs**, while **centring diphthongs** occur, for example, in *bare*, *beer*, and *sure*.

Phonemes and phonology

Phonemes, in contrast to phones, are defined by their function within the language system (**langue**). This function is basically one of **meaning differentiation**, although other functions of phonic means, such as an expressive function of vowel lengthening (*That was coooooool*), are also possible. All sounds, however, which have a meaning-differentiating function within a given language are considered **phonemes** within that language system; these are abstract, idealized units within our minds or parts of our model of a language that we design; in language use (**parole**) phonemes are always realized as phones.

The test for these smallest distinctive units of a given language system is the **minimal pair** test, i.e. when a difference in sound structure also causes a shift in meaning. An example is [k] in *cable* and [t] in *table*, which therefore constitute **phonemes** of English, indicated by the notation /k/ and /t/. Note, however, that we are dealing with the actual sound structure here, not with spelling, so *tea/he* are a minimal pair, while *see/sea* are not. Also, minimal pairs are only pairings that differ in exactly one segment; so, *pin* and *tin*, or *tin* and *ten*, are minimal pairs, while *pin* and *ten* would be not.

Allophones

Some sound differences do not differentiate meaning, as in the pronunciation of /l/ in the words *lip* and *pill*. While the difference may be only slight (you may try to keep track of where you place the tip of your tongue), from a phonetic point of view the two realizations of /l/ have to be considered two phones, but not two phonemes. They are called **clear** and **dark** /l/ and are two **allophones** of the phoneme /l/ in English.

Distribution of allophones

In contrast to phonemes, allophones do not occur in minimal pairs, which means they either never occur in the same environment (**complementary distribution**), as in the case of clear and dark /l/, or they occur in **free variation**. For example, voiceless plosives at the end of a syllable or word are sometimes aspirated (if *deep* is pronounced [di:p^h]), but they may just as well not be (if *deep* is pronounced [di:p]). The decisive difference between phonemes and their allophones is that the variants of a phoneme do not differentiate meaning, and therefore the sound difference does not constitute a relevant phonetic feature.

Phonological systems

The phonology of a language is also the inventory of its phonemes, i.e. the sum of all those sounds that show distinctive (i.e. meaning-differentiating) phonetic differences. RP as the standard (British) **English sound system**, for example, has

- 24 consonants,

- 12 vowels, and
- 8 diphthongs

but it has many more allophones (such as clear and dark /l/, or the aspirated plosives). By contrast, [this table](#) shows the phoneme inventory of [Standard Mandarin](#), the official language of China: As can be seen, one major difference to English is that Standard Mandarin lacks the voiced bilabial, alveolar and velar plosives /b/, /d/ and /g/, while it has the aspirated versions of the consonants p^h, t^h, k^h as distinct phonemes. In other words, a difference (aspiration) that does not distinguish meaning in English and is thus a **redundant** articulatory feature constitutes a **distinctive feature** in Mandarin Chinese, while another one (the voicing of plosives) is distinctive in English (i.e. it distinguishes meaning), but not in Chinese.

Syllables

Phonology does not only describe a system of sounds in isolation, but it also deals with the rules and restrictions that hold for their combinations. This branch of phonology is called **phonotactics**. Phones combine into the **syllable**, which is essentially a vowel with optional consonants clustered around it. The vowel forms the **nucleus** of a syllable, with the onset in front of it and the coda behind it. Depending on whether there is a coda or not, a syllable can be described as either **closed** or **open**. The basic form of the English syllable is (CCC) V (CCCC), i.e. *I*, *spray*, or *texts* are all examples of one syllable but of different complexity.

Prosody

Prosody belongs to the domain of suprasegmental phonology in that it describes phenomena extending over more than one phoneme. The phenomena that belong here are stress, rhythm, and intonation. While **stress** can be word or sentence stress, **rhythm** and **intonation** occur in phrases and sentences. **Intonation** is described by reference to **pitch** (tones); different levels of pitch are used to express a wide range of meanings: for example, we use the difference between a falling and a rising pitch pattern in statements and questions.

Connected Speech

The phonological changes that occur when language is used in natural utterances are described as features of connected speech. The most important ones are:

- **assimilation**, i.e. when neighbouring sounds become more alike (as in *im-possible*, in contrast to *in-decent*)
- **elision**, i.e. the loss of sounds (as in *Chris(t)mas* or *san(d)wich*)
- **intrusion** and **linking** (as in *law(r) and order*).

The most important feature of connected speech, however, is the occurrence of **weak forms**, which is the result of the occurrence of stress in connected speech. English has the property of being a **stress-timed** language, which means there is a tendency for stressed syllables to occur at fairly equal intervals. As a result, in unstressed syllables vowel quality tends to be weakened, mostly to the **schwa** [ə], but the total omission of vowels (as it frequently happens in **contractions**, such as *isn't*, *she's*) is also possible, particularly in the case of function words (auxiliaries, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions).

References (for some of the more technical descriptions):

Cruttenden, Alan 2008. *Gimson's pronunciation of English*. Seventh Edition. London: Hodder Arnold Publication.

Sokolova, M.A. et al 1997. *Prakticheskaya fonetika anglijskogo jazyka* [English practical phonetics]. Moskva: Vldos

Reading:

Finegan, Edward (2004). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. Ch. 3+4.

Kortmann, Bernd (2005). *English Linguistics: Essentials*. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag. Ch. 2.

Yule, George (2006). *The Study of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 4.

Advanced Reading:

Giegerich, Heinz J. (1995). *English Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacMahon, April (2006). *An introduction to English phonology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Phonetics: *The Sounds of English and Spanish*. The Phonetics Flash Animation Project provided by the University of Iowa. <http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics> (Accessed: 15/02/2010)

Chapter 3: Morphology

by Susan Dostert

Morphology comes from a Greek word meaning ‘shape’ or ‘form’ and is used in linguistics to denote the study of words, both with regard to their internal structure and their combination or formation to form new or larger units.

Words

‘Word’ is a term in common everyday use but one which linguists cannot easily define. Is *isn’t* for example one word or two? And how about *mother-in-law*? It denotes one concept but is formed out of three recognisable ‘words’: *mother*, *in* and *law*. Linguists therefore prefer other terms, referring to **morphs**, **morphemes** and **lexemes** when talking about ‘words’.

Morpheme types

Morphemes are defined as the smallest meaning-bearing units in language. These are abstract units, realised in actual language by a morph, or if there are various ways of realising one morpheme by its **allomorphs**. If morphemes are **free** they will coincide with what we call a word, but morphemes can also be **bound** in which case they are less than a word (although they carry meaning). The free morphemes are generally also referred to as **lexemes**, and the bound ones as **affixes**. (Note that lexemes can be simple i.e. consisting of just one free morpheme or complex consisting of 2 or more morphemes of which at least one is free.) Affixes which come in front of a free morpheme are **prefixes**, and those which come after are **suffixes**.

Example:

trees

tree is an example of a free morpheme as it can stand on its own and has a **lexical meaning**. *-s* on the other hand is simply a letter (technical term: **graph**) / sound (technical term: **phone**) which turns the lexeme *tree* into a plural. It is a separate morpheme as it contributes (**grammatical**) **meaning** to the whole: *trees*. The *-s* cannot stand on its own and is therefore a bound morpheme, a suffix.

Some special sub-types of morph are the **cranberry** or **unique morph**, which only occurs in one lexeme in a particular language, the **zero morph**, which has a meaning / function but no form, and the **portmanteau morph**, where more than one morpheme (or meaning) is fused together in one form.

Inflection

Bound morphemes which carry grammatical (or **functional**) **meaning** are called **inflectional affixes** and their function is to create new forms of existing lexemes. In English these are always suffixes, i.e. there are no inflectional prefixes in English. It is generally claimed that there are only eight such inflectional affixes left in English, making Modern English an **analytic language**.

Example:

Type of inflection	Grammatical category	Function / Meaning	Word class	Example
Declension	Number	Plural	Nouns	<i>tree-s</i>
Declension	Case	Possessive (genitive)	Nouns	<i>John- 's</i>
Conjugation	Number, Person , Tense	3 rd . pers. sg.	Verbs	<i>look-s</i>
Conjugation	Tense	(Regular) simple past	Verbs	<i>look-ed</i>
Conjugation		(Regular) past participle	Verbs	<i>look-ed</i>
Conjugation		Present participle	Verbs	<i>look-ing</i>
Comparison	Comparison	Comparative	Adjectives	<i>smart-er</i>
Comparison	Comparison	Superlative	Adjectives	<i>smart-est</i>

Derivation

Other affixes (which can be prefixes or suffixes) have lexical meaning and are used to create new lexemes.

Example:

dis-obey

obe(y)-dient

obey is a lexeme (i.e. a free morpheme) and a verb meaning “to do what you are told or expected to do”. If we prefix *dis-* to this morpheme we change the meaning completely to a something more like “to refuse to obey”. In other words, we have created a whole new verb/lexeme (with a new lexical meaning) rather than just a new form of the same lexeme. This important process is one of the major ways in which the English **lexicon** has been formed, and is called **derivation**. Looking at *obedient*, we see that a suffix has been added here (and the graph *y* dropped). Again the meaning has been transformed: *obedient* means “willing to obey”, but crucially in this case the word class has also changed as *obedient* is an adjective and no longer a verb. This is something that frequently happens in derivation but does not have to (as exemplified by *disobey*).

Other more productive word-formation processes

Derivation is one of the three major (and most **productive**) types of **word-formation processes** visible in English. The other two most important ones are **compounding** and **conversion**. In compounding (which is even more productive in German), free morphemes (lexemes) are combined to form new, longer ones.

Example:

keyboard

kick-off

leap year

Each of these three examples consists of two free morphemes which have been joined together to form a new lexeme / concept. Prototypically these will be noun + noun (N+N) **compounds** (e.g. *keyboard*), but other combinations are possible e.g. *kick-off* consisting of a verb / noun¹ + preposition (V/N+P). Note also that the orthography of such compounds can vary, either being written as separate units, hyphenated or as one. (Unfortunately, there is no clear rule to predict the spelling, although there is a tendency for newer compounds to be written separately at first, later hyphenated, and then possibly becoming one unit after much use.)

Total conversion (also sometimes referred to as **zero derivation**) is a process involving word class change but without any changes to the form of the lexeme. In **partial conversion** the spoken form may change.

Example:

1. *My elbow hurts.*

He elbowed me out of the way.

2. *Linguistics is my favourite subject.*

She was subjected to degrading treatment.

In the first example, *elbow* is a noun, but then the same (superficially unchanged) lexeme is being used as a verb and has received the regular past tense ending. In the second example, *subject* is first being used as a noun with the **main stress** on the first **syllable**, but then it has been converted to a verb and the stress has shifted to the second syllable. *elbow* is therefore an example of (N→V) total conversion and *subject* an example of (N→V) partial conversion as the spoken form has changed.

Less productive word-formation processes

Apart from these ‘big three’, there are further ways of expanding the lexicon, but none of them are terribly productive in English. These are: **blending**, **clipping**, **back-formation**, **acronyms** and **initialisms** and all involve shortening the source lexeme(s) in some way.

¹ As English often does not distinguish morphologically between word classes, it is not always possible to tell without context.

In blending, at least two free morphemes are ‘fused’ or ‘melted’ together whereby typically the front of one and the end of the other remain to create a new lexeme.

Example:

electrocute = *electronic* + *execute*

brash = *bold* + *rash*

snazzy = *snappy* + *jazzy*

There are a number of sub-types of clipping: fore-clipping, back-clipping (which is most common) and lexemes which have been both fore- and back-clipped.

Example:

phone = fore-clipping of *telephone*

bro = back-clipping to form a more informal version of *brother*

fridge = fore- and back-clipping of *refrigerator*

Back-formation is a slightly more complex type of word-formation process as it involves removing something which is not actually present. In this process we can see how analogies work to change the language, as something which is considered an affix (on the basis of other lexemes) is dropped to create a new lexeme.

Example:

stage manager → *stage manage* (cp. *teach* → *teacher* etc.)

donation → *donate* (cp. *relate* → *relation* etc.)

The *-er* suffix is one found on countless nouns derived from verbs e.g. *teacher*, *reader*, *driver*, etc. Assuming, therefore, that the *-er* in *stage manager* is comparable to these, speakers start to drop the suffix to create what is considered to be the verb from which it could have derived.

The difference between such examples and those created by derivation is therefore one of direction or chronology. In derivation we start with the shorter lexeme and affix a further morpheme to create a new lexeme. In back-formation, in contrast, we drop what looks like an affix (but is in fact simply part of the source lexeme) to create the new, shorter one.

The two remaining word-formation processes: acronyms and initialisms are both formed in the same way but then pronounced differently. Both are (normally) based on the initial letters of a string of words (or phrase), but where the initialism continues to pronounce these as separate letters (e.g. *USA* and *DNA*), the acronym (e.g. *scuba* and *NATO*) pronounces them as if they were a ‘normal’ word.

Example:

scuba = *self-contained underwater breathing apparatus*

NATO = *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*

USA = United States of America

DNA = deoxyribonucleic acid

Borrowing

This is a further way of expanding the lexicon, and one which has played a major role in the development of English, but is not normally considered one of the word-formation processes.

Word classes

We tend to distinguish between **open word classes**, which include **nouns**, **full verbs**, **adjectives** and some **adverbs**, and more **closed word classes** to which **pronouns**, **prepositions**, **determiners**, **modal (verb)s**, **auxiliaries**, **primary verbs**, **conjunctions**, etc. belong. Theoretically, all of the lexemes in the English language can be assigned to one of these even if it is often difficult to carry out when they occur in isolation (i.e. without context) as many word forms can belong to more than one word class e.g. *round* can be a noun, a verb, an adjective, an adverb or a preposition.

Reading

Kortmann, Bernd (2005). *English Linguistics: Essentials*. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag. Ch. 3.

Finegan, Edward (2004). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. Ch. 2

Advanced Reading

Pinker, Steven (1999). *Words and Rules. The Ingredients of Language*. London: Phoenix.

Plag, Ingo (2003). *Word-formation in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chapter 4: Syntax

by Heidrun Dorgeloh

Syntax, together with inflectional morphology, belongs to what is in traditional terminology the 'grammar of a language'. People have many associations with that term and not all of them are necessarily positive. For example, some people believe that certain uses of language are instances of 'bad grammar', that everyday spoken language and youth slang 'lack grammar' or that the grammar of their native language is deteriorating. All these views are based on a normative, or **prescriptive**, attitude towards grammar, while linguists approach grammar, just like any other aspect of language, **descriptively**, in the same way that a biologist approaches an organism or a physician looks at molecules.

Languages change over time, as do the needs of their speakers, and while a conversation with your friends may be linguistically *different* from a political speech, a piece of poetry or a newspaper article, it is not 'less grammatical'. The use of a sentence in actual situations, i.e. its **utterance**, may be more or less acceptable given that context; also, its content, or its **proposition**, may be untrue or may not make sense; still, any competent speaker of a language is able to decide which strings of words form grammatical sequences, i.e. **sentences**, and which don't. It is this invisible and at the same time highly productive grammatical system which is at work every time we construct a linguistic unit more complex than a single word. Just like morphology, syntax is not concerned with what a sentence *means*, but with the internal structure of units and their relations to one another. In other words, syntax asks which sentences are in accord with the grammatical rules imposed by a particular language and which aren't. It is important to recognize that this status of sentences is an idealized one to some extent: Spoken language often consists of incomplete utterances and seemingly disjointed pieces, but this does not mean that these utterances are 'less grammatical'.

Grammar and inflectional morphology

The term 'grammar' covers the proper use of **words** and **word-forms** as well as the grammatical structure of **phrases**, **clauses**, and **sentences**. While different word-forms of lexemes are created by the adding of **inflectional morphemes**, combinations of words into more complex units are the domain of **syntax** proper. **Grammatical categories** that are marked by English inflectional morphology are tense, person, number, gender, case, and comparison. Most of these grammatical categories which can thus be formed **synthetically** can also be expressed **analytically** (such as the comparison of adjectives, or possessive case); others are always formed periphrastically, i.e. by the use of **function words** (such as many tenses, or voice), or are no longer expressed at all (such as grammatical gender). Due to its limited number of inflectional morphemes, Modern English is considered an **isolating**, or **analytic**, language.

Sentence structure

Sentences are not simply chains of words, but have an internal, mostly hierarchical structure. This **grammatical hierarchy** can be illustrated by the following list of the categories used for the analysis of sentence structure:

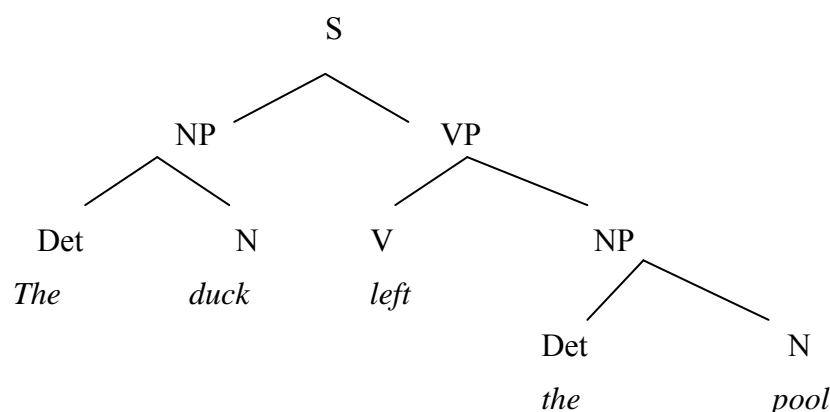
1. **sentences** contain one or several
2. **clauses** contain one or several
3. **phrases** contain one or several
4. words from different **word classes**

Word classes

The starting-point of the analysis of sentence structure is the classification of words into **word classes** or, more traditionally, **parts of speech**. A basic division is made between **lexical** and grammatical (or **functional**) **word classes**; to the former belong **nouns**, **verbs**, **adjectives** and **adverbs**, to the latter the classes of **determiners**, **pronouns**, **prepositions**, and **conjunctions**. While speakers come up with new lexical words quite frequently, i.e. these constitute a rather **open set**, function words usually form a **closed system**. Although word class definitions have traditionally been based on semantic criteria, it is much safer to define a word class on the basis of **structural**, i.e. morphological and syntactic, **criteria**.

Phrase structure

Sentences also consist of structural units larger than lexical categories, these **sentence constituents** are called **phrases**. In the analysis they are represented by brackets or in **tree diagrams**.



There are a number of **constituency tests**, such as substitution, movement, and coordination, which can show which groups of words form syntactic units and which do not. For example, in the sentence represented above, *The duck* could be replaced by *it* or could be coordinated with another NP, while the sequence of words *duck left* or *left the* does not show this form of syntactic behavior.

Example:

It left the pool. (= substitution test for NP)

The duck and the penguin left the pool. (coordination test for NP)

Types of phrases

Different types of phrases are defined by different types of lexical **heads**, so each phrase type has its central, obligatory element: There are **noun** phrases, **verb** phrases, **adjective** phrases, **adverb** phrases, and **prepositional** phrases.

Examples:

[The duck] = **NP** *[left the pool]* = **VP**.

[In the morning] = **PP** *[the duck]* *[left the pool]*.

*[The [incredibly stupid] = **AdjP** duck] [left the pool]*.

[The duck] left the pool [incredibly slowly] = **AdvP**

As can be seen in some of these examples, in **phrase structure** phrases are frequently 'packaged' inside other phrases, giving sentences their internal hierarchical structure. The productivity of syntax that results from the - at least potentially - unlimited embedding and coordination of phrases within other phrases has been described as the **recursiveness of grammar**.

Clauses

While words and morphemes have meaning, it is only phrases that can have **reference**. A clause, then, consists of a **referring expression** and a **predication**, which is why only clauses carry information about something. The referring expression is always a **noun phrase (NP)**, while the predication is a **verb phrase (VP)**. Accordingly, a complete English sentence, such as the following example sentence, will always contain these components.

Example:

[The duck] = NP *[left the pool]* = VP.

Grammatical relations

While the constituents of a sentence are its formal components, **syntactic roles** or grammatical relations define the functional relationship within the clause, in particular the relation of all the other constituents (the **arguments**) to the verb. In a clause there is always a noun phrase that fills the role of **subject** in relation to the main verb, other roles are assigned depending on the **transitivity** of the verb: **Intransitive** verbs do not permit an object, **monotransitive** require a **direct object**, while **ditransitives** have so-called double object constructions, i.e. an **indirect object** before the **direct** one.

Example:

[The duck] NP=subject *left* *[the pool]* NP=direct object

A syntactic role associated in turn with subjects and objects, is that of **subject** or **object complements**. They are usually required with so-called **copula** or **linking verbs**, in relation to which they can be described as **predicative** complements.

Example:

[The duck] NP=subject *is* *[a fool]* NP=complement

In contrast to complements, **adverbials** are less close in their relation to the verb, they can be described as predicating either the verb or the entire clause, but are usually not obligatory and can be moved in the sentence rather freely.

Example:

[Last month] NP=adverbial *[the duck]* *[left the pool]*.

[The duck] *[left the pool]* *[last month]* NP= adverbial].

Note, however, that these terms in syntax (in particular, *object*, *complement* and *adverbial*) are used with a variety of meanings within different theories; the terminology we use here is a rather traditional one and sometimes poses problems of **fuzziness**.

Semantic roles

In terms of the meaning carried by a sentence, different grammatical relations are prototypically linked to different semantic roles. So the subject typically contains the element which carries out an action (i.e. the **agent**), while the direct object is often the entity affected by an action (or the **patient**). Other semantic roles are **recipient**, **time**, **place**, **source**, **goal**, and **instrument**. Although it is generally the verb that determines which semantic roles are present, category boundaries may again be fuzzy.

Example:

The duck left [the penguin]. = patient

The duck left [the pool]. = place

Clauses and sentences

Clause and sentence can be used synonymously when dealing with **simple sentences**, i.e. a simple sentence contains a single independent clause. By contrast, **compound sentences** contain multiple clauses that are linked by way of **coordinating conjunctions** or **parataxis**. **Complex sentences** consist of a **main clause** and at least one **subordinate clause**.

Example:

The duck left the pool. = simple sentence

The duck left the pool, but the penguin stayed behind. = compound sentence

The duck left the pool although the penguin stayed behind. = complex sentence

Dependent clauses can be finite or non-finite: In a **finite clause** the verb is **inflected** and marked for agreement with the subject, while non-finite verbs are non-tensed and possible only in subordinate clauses. English has three basic varieties of **non-inflected verb forms**: participles, gerunds and infinitives.

Example:

The duck left the pool = finite main clause, *the penguin staying behind* = non-finite subordinate clause.

The canonical sentence form in English

The basic form of the English **declarative sentence** follows the **canonical word order** of subject - verb (- object), or SVO; this applies to **main** as well as to **subordinate clauses**. That is, in contrast to many other languages (such as German, Latin, or Persian, for example), the ordering of sentence elements in English is **fixed** and often makes up for case marking (in signalling syntactic roles). This property of English, together with its low number of inflectional morphemes, leads to the classification of English as an **analytic**, or isolating, **language**. There are, however, exceptions such as the **fronting** of certain sentence elements

or special constructions (such as the **passive** or **clefting**), which are usually motivated by the **discourse context**, i.e. used and acceptable for **pragmatic** reasons.

Example:

The pool the duck left, and not the pond. = fronting of direct object

The penguin was left behind by the duck. = passive

It was the pool the duck left. = clefting

Note, however, that especially the fronting of the direct object is only marginally grammatical and, since it will usually require a lot of context, tends to occur in speaking rather than in writing.

Reading

Kortmann, Bernd (2005). *English Linguistics: Essentials*. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag. Ch. 4.

Plag, Ingo et al. 2007. *Introduction to English Linguistics*, Berlin: Mouton, Kap.4.

Advanced Reading

Börjars, Kersti & Burridge, Kate (2001). *Introducing English Grammar*. London: Arnold.

Kaplan, Jeffrey (1989). *English Grammar: Principles and Facts*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Miller, Jim (2002). *An Introduction to English Syntax*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Chapter 5: Semantics

by Cornelius Puschmann

One reoccurring theme in this reader (for example, in the chapters on phonology, morphology and syntax) has been is the focus on internal structure (for example of words and sentences) in contrast to meaning (i.e. what a piece of language tells us about the world). Semantics covers that domain of meaning.

What's the meaning of *to mean*?

Meaning as a concept is initially more difficult to define than you might think. The verb *mean* itself serves as an example for the different meanings a single word can take on:

Sorry, I didn't mean to offend you

Great -- this means we'll have to spend another hour in the car

Dog means 'chien' in French

In the first example, the meaning of *mean* is roughly equivalent to 'intend', in the second it means 'it is the consequence of something' and in the third it is equivalent of '*dog* translates into *chien*'. The examples show that an extremely common word like *mean* can easily be used to describe very different things.

Conventional meaning vs. social and affective meaning

Not only can words be used with different meanings in different contexts, but the entire description of what something means depends greatly on the type of expression we are talking about. Compare the following examples:

Beagles are a breed of dogs

Hey Stan, how are you?

Linguistics is really cool!

The first sentence differs from the second and third in that it makes a statement about the world that can be verified or falsified. By contrast, if someone states that he/she likes or dislikes something (the third example) this is a subjective and unverifiable statement. Such an expression still contains important information, but it has what we call **affective meaning**. Similarly, a question such as the one provided in the second example has **social meaning**, as do words we use to address people (*Mister, Misses, Sir, Your Honor, Dude* - also think about *Sie* vs. *Du* in German), ways of greeting and saying goodbye (*Hi, Cheers, Regards, Wassup*) and many other parts of language which are essential in our everyday interactions with others. Note that what could be called a third type - *grammatical* meaning - has been discussed in the previous chapter.

Semantics, however, is concerned purely with the **conventional meaning** of words and sentences. Conventional (or sometimes *conceptual*) meaning can be described in almost mathematical terms and it can be applied to sentences that we can often evaluate in terms of

their **truth value**. *Beagles are a breed of dogs* is such as example: it can be described as being either true or false. Conventional meaning also captures the kind of information that content words carry (*man, New York, run, happy*) but not expressions whose meaning is purely social or affective (*Yeah, cool, Hi, Regards*) or grammatical (*and, the*).

Reference

Reference (or *referential meaning*) is one of the most basic ways of thinking about meaning. The **referent** of an expression is essentially 'the thing in the world that it points to'. Thus

Barak Obama

Berlin, Alexanderplatz

Sally's cat

These old CDs

are linguistic expressions that have definite referents, although they might not be entirely clear without knowing the context (more than one person can be called Sally, she could have more than one cat and what CDs are meant exactly in the last example depends on the situation). What counts in terms of referential meaning is the assumption that a specific cat owned by a specific Sally is meant with *Sally's cat* and that with access to the context it would be clear what CDs are signified by *these old CDs*.

Multiple expressions can point to the same thing in the world, as the list below demonstrates.

1. *Hillary Clinton*
2. *the former first lady*
3. *the wife of Bill Clinton*
4. *the U.S. Secretary of State*
5. *the former U.S. presidential candidate*

All of these expressions apply to the [same referent](#), yet 3 and 4 could (at least hypothetically) change at some point in time. Referring expressions and referents have a dynamic relationship - it can change as circumstances change.

By contrast, the underlined expressions below never point to anything in the world, regardless of the context they are used in (they are not *referential*):

A bunch of people called

He is buying a new car

Nobody *showed up*

Elephants *are native to Africa*

All of these examples have in common that no definite referent exists for them, yet they certainly mean something.

Sense

As the examples above show, it is necessary to capture meaning beyond reference. Some expressions do not have a definite referent, while others cannot be described as referential because they point to something fictional. For example

Santa Claus

Bilbo Baggins

and

my shiny new spaceship

all have meaning, but none of them has a referent in the real world. The term **sense** is generally used to describe the conventional semantic meaning of an expression that is separate (or 'goes beyond') its reference. Sense is also used to describe the semantic content of expressions that describe activities, states, qualities, attributes, relations etc - as you may have noticed, reference essentially only applies to nouns. Still an adjective like *heavy* or a preposition like *under* has a conventional meaning and can be defined in terms of their relation to other terms (for example, we could describe *heavy* as the opposite of *light* and *under* as relatively similar to *below*). We'll see in the section on lexical semantics that an expression is not limited to just once sense, but can easily take on multiple senses (remember *mean*?).

Denotation & Connotation

The terms **denotation** and **connotation** are useful to separate the literal, value-neutral and restricted sense of an expression from its figural, cultural or associative meanings. For example, the word *pig* simply denotes a specific animal, but the connotation of the term is often negative and it can be used in a figurative way, for example, to describe a person. The connotation of a term depends on the usage community's values and beliefs, whereas denotation does not.

Extension

An expression's **extension** is the sum of all senses and referents to which it applies. For example, the extension of the term *man* is roughly 50% of the world's population; the extension of *Mike's friend* would include whomever Mike is friends with.

Semantic anomaly

You might wonder why we even have to make a distinction between conventional, social and affective meaning. Since they are all important to language users, why be so specific about it? The reason is that, like expressions that are *ungrammatical*, expressions that are semantically malformed are not just subjectively problematic, or wrong in certain contexts, or go against the taste of some speakers, but simply "do not work" and are not used by speakers. The example below illustrates the issue:

John likes basketball

"The table likes basketball"

If you find the second sentence strange (and you should) it is because it is **semantically anomalous** - it doesn't 'make sense' (I've used two single quotes to mark this, a bit like the asterisk used to denote sentences which are ungrammatical). Noam Chomsky's famous example sentence *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously* is another instance of an expression that violates the constraints of conventional meaning. There's nothing wrong with the sentence in social or affective terms, nor is it ungrammatical, but any reasonably competent speaker of English could tell you that it is inherently illogical. What we know about the world simply tells us that *ideas* can't *sleep* or be *green* and that *the table*, *Madagascar* or *world peace* are generally not acceptable subjects of the verb *like* while *Mary*, *those boys* and *nobody* are. As will be shown below, this interface between 'what we know about the world' and language can be described quite systematically.

Semantic roles

Among other things, **semantic roles** allow us to explain why an example such as the one above (*"The table likes basketball"*) is semantically anomalous. Loosely speaking, semantic roles describe 'who does what' in a sentence and they are often discussed in concert with syntax because they exist in parallel to **syntactic roles**. A classical example for how semantic roles function is passive voice:

John hugged *Sue* (active)

Sue was hugged by *John* (passive)

The **blue** word in each sentence is the subject of main verb *hugged*, the **red** word is the object. You'll notice that the passive sentence does not have an object (*hugged* has become intransitive) and that *John* has been 'stored away' in an optional adverbial (*by John*). In other words, the subject of the sentence has changed as the voice has switched from active to passive. But what about the meaning? Clearly it is still Sue who is hugged by John, not the other way around. Semantic roles allow us to describe this dimension of 'who did what to whom'. Here's the example again, but this time highlighting the semantic roles:

John hugged *Sue* (active)

Sue was hugged by *John* (passive)

The two roles marked in green and yellow are called agent and patient and they stay the same when switching from active to passive because the meaning of the sentence does not change. John is still the one doing the hugging and Sue is still being hugged - while syntactically there is a switch, semantically there is no change. Below is an overview of some essential semantic roles. Note that different theorists have proposed different roles and labeled them differently, therefore there is no absolute agreement.

Agent: The 'doer' of the action

Sue pushed *Steve*

Patient (or Theme): The 'undergoer' of the action

Sue pushed *Steve* (but also *Sue* fell down)

Experiencer: The entity that experiences the action

Sue felt happy

Instrument: A medium or tool used to complete the action

Sue opened the door with the key

Goal: The location or entity towards which something moves

Sue drove to Chicago

Benefactive (or Recipient): The entity that benefits from the action

Sue gave Kim the tickets

Semantic features

While semantic roles describe 'who does what' in a relatively basic way (someone affects someone else, someone benefits from an action) semantic features represent the specific properties something needs to have to be semantically acceptable in a certain construction. Here's the example from above once more:

John likes basketball

"The table likes basketball

The dog ran across the field

"The refrigerator ran across the field

What's wrong with the second and the fourth sentence? The answer is that the experience and the action described (*like*, *run*) can't be made and performed by non-living things such as tables and refrigerators.

	<i>John</i>	<i>the table</i>	<i>the dog</i>	<i>the refrigerator</i>
animate	+	-	+	-

The term *animacy* is used to describe whether or not something is what we conventionally call 'alive'. It is apparently a requirement for the subject X to have the feature +animate in order for a sentence like *X ran across the field* to be semantically well-formed. Different or additional features may be required in other contexts and the list below serves only as an example:

	<i>John</i>	<i>the table</i>	<i>the dog</i>	<i>the refrigerator</i>	<i>lemonade</i>
animate	+	-	+	-	-
human	+	-	-	-	-

canine	-	-	+	-	-
liquid	-	-	-	-	+

While 'animate' and 'human' are broader (and more useful) features than 'canine' and 'liquid', all of them are distinctive in certain contexts. Humans are generally the subject of verbs such as *like*, *adore*, *hate* and *consider*, some kind of dog is generally the subject of the verb *bark* and some form of liquid generally the direct object of the verb *drink*.

"Dana's mother has no children

"The empty bucket is full

"The meeting will take place three years ago

We can generally explain semantic anomaly via some kind of feature mismatch. In the examples above, the mismatch occurs in different places: +mother and +no children do not match, +empty and +full are not compatible and +future event +past event do not work together. Note that these are not commonly used features, but reading the examples like this makes it simple to spot the semantic problem right away.

Lexical semantics

While analysis of the semantic content of an utterance is possible using differently sized chunks of language (phrases, sentences, entire texts), it is common to start on the word level and to examine words that intuitively seem to "go together". Drawing up a map of [sense relations](#) is possible only after developing terms to describe these relations. The technical vocabulary explained below is used in lexical semantics to describe the relationship between terms. Are two terms neighbors? Opposites? Do they have a part-whole relationship? Lexical semantics has the goal of answering such questions.

Word fields

As has already been discussed, semantics is concerned with meaning. One way of defining meaning is by looking at the relationship of a group of terms in unison. Do they "go together" or not? Have a look at the following examples:

eyes, hands, nose, feet

green, red, purple, yellow

dog, log, hog, fog

While the terms in the first two sets are all related to one another (they form a word field), the words in the third set make up an arbitrary mix. This is likely to be the impression of most native speakers - *dog* and *log* simply have nothing in common in terms of meaning -, but it underscores a point we made very early in this course: [the arbitrariness of the sign](#). The words in the third set share an identical sound pattern (save for the initial phoneme), but their meaning does not reflect this in any way.

Word fields as they are described above aren't a purely theoretical exercise. *Sets*, an experimental tool developed by Google can automatically predict a word field based on very limited human input. Try it yourself [here](#).

Synonymy

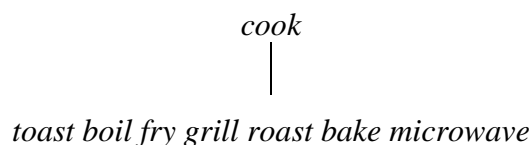
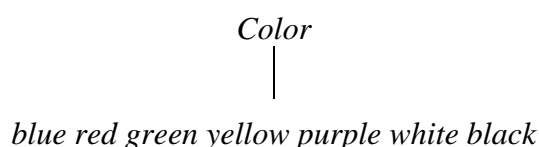
Synonymy is the degree of sameness (in regards to meaning) that two terms share. Natural languages afford fairly little space for complete synonyms (that would not be economical) and accordingly, small meaning differences exist. [Buy](#) and [purchase](#) are an example for two near-complete synonyms. In purely semantic terms, both words mean the same thing, but their use depends on the context they are used in. *Purchase* is likely to be used in slightly more high-brow language, whereas *buy* is the more common (in both [senses](#) of the word) variant. English has a fairly high number of (near) synonyms because of the influx of French words into the lexicon.

Antonymy

Antonyms are binary opposition pairs such as *happy - unhappy*, *tall - short*, *young - old*, *war - peace*. Their decisive quality is that the meaning of one term automatically excludes the other - someone who is tall is not short and someone who is unhappy is not happy. Antonyms can be gradable or non-gradable, depending on whether or not we can attach inflectional morphemes to them to indicate a comparison (*happy - happier - happiest* vs *beautiful - *beautifuller - *beautifullest*)

Hyponymy

Hyponymy describes hierarchical relations between terms. If we can say that *X is a kind of Y*, a hyponymous relationship exists between X and Y. The two examples below illustrate this kind of connection.



In the examples, the terms *color* and *cook* are **superordinates**, while the words listed below them are their **hyponyms**.

Related to this is the concept of **meronymy**, which describes part-whole relationships. A meronymical relation is slightly different from a hyponymous one: eyes, lips and nose are *part* of the face - they are not *a kind of face*.

Homophones

Homophones are terms that have a similar sound pattern, but are otherwise unrelated. Examples for this are *see - sea*, *buy - bye*, *might - mite*, *night - knight*. When two terms are spelled similarly but the sound patterns differ, we speak of homographs. An example for a pair of homographs is *wind*, as in *we wind up in the same club every weekend* vs. *the wind is very cold in December*. When both pronunciation and writing are identical, linguists conventionally speak of homonyms (see below).

Homonyms

Homonyms are terms that are superficially identical (in speech and writing) but etymologically unrelated:

match = thing that you light a cigarette with
match = thing that a soccer team loses

date = a sweet kind of fruit (ger: [Dattel](#))
date = an appointment

Note that homonyms are characterized by the fact that they look the same superficially, but are actually unrelated. Usually the [etymology](#) of a word is key in determining whether it is a homonym.

Polysemy

In contrast to homonymity, which describes separate words with different meanings that only happen to look similar, polysemy describes individual word with multiple and distinct senses (polysemes). The term *bank*, for example, can denote either the institution or the building in which the institution resides. Both meanings are associated with the same word, making bank polysemous. By contrast, a *river bank* is not a different meaning of the same term, but a different word entirely.

Conceptual metaphors

While the abovementioned descriptions are use to describe sense relations, **conceptual metaphor** is a model that aims to explain how human cognition deals with certain aspects of meaning. Based largely on ideas put forth by [George Lakoff](#) and [Mark Johnson](#) in their book [Metaphors We Live By](#), a conceptual metaphor is an expression from ordinary language in which the meaning associated with a target domain is drawn from a source domain that is (subconsciously) perceived as sharing certain traits of the target (TARGET is SOURCE).

These examples serve to demonstrate the idea:

"ANGER is HEAT"

You make my blood boil

Let her stew

She got all steamed up

He's just blowing off steam

"TIME is MONEY"

She spends her time unwisely

The diversion should buy him some time

Time is money

"IDEAS are OBJECTS"

Sally gave the idea to Sam

Sally took the idea from Sam

Sally traded ideas with Sam

Sally has an idea

Many more examples are available on [George Lakoff's website](#).

Reading

Kortmann, Bernd (2005). *English Linguistics: Essentials*. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag. Ch. 6.

Finegan, Edward (2004). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. Ch. 6

Advanced Reading

Löbner, Sebastian (2002). *Understanding Semantics*. London: Arnold.

Lyons, John (1977). *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chapter 6: Pragmatics

by Cornelius Puschmann

In human communication, much of what is expressed goes beyond simply conveying information to others. One limitation of semantics is that dimensions of meaning that are outside the content of the linguistic sign are also outside the scope of description. **Social and affective meaning** are not covered by semantics (which focuses on **conventional/conceptual meaning** only), but virtually any real-life communicative situation contains signs which are used to express something about the speakers and their social relationships. Pragmatics is concerned with how people use **language within a context**, in real-life situations. While semantics is concerned with **words, phrases and sentences**, the unit of analysis in pragmatics is an **utterance made in a concrete communicative context**. Pragmatics is concerned with how factors such as time, place and the social relationship between speaker and hearer affect the ways in which language is used to perform different functions.

Inference and presupposition

How do we get from message to meaning? We infer the "total meaning" of an utterance based on all the information we have available in the moment we hear it. This includes past experiences, our knowledge about the person we are communicating with, about the situation, about what was previously said, what is deemed culturally appropriate and countless other factors. In everyday communication, speakers have a number of **presuppositions** about the world-knowledge of hearers. When someone addresses you and says "Did you know that John and Mary split up?" the speaker has the presupposition that you know John and Mary and were aware of the fact that they were previously a couple. Our presuppositions lead us to formulate utterances whose meaning we assume can be **inferred** by listeners - in other words, that can be deduced by those we communicate with. After all, we all want to be understood.

Pragmatic implicature and entailment

If **inference** is what listeners do to interpret the meaning of utterances, **implicature** is the process through which speakers include meaning beyond the literal message in an utterance.

Example:

Bob: *Are you coming to the party?*

Jane: *You know, I'm really busy.*

Jane's response pragmatically implicates her intention (that she won't come to the party), which Bob can infer via his past experience from countless other conversations. Pragmatic implicatures are characterized by the fact that usually several alternative interpretations are possible. For example, the dialogue above could also go like this:

Example:

Bob: *Are you coming to the party?*

Jane: *You know, I'm really busy, **but I'll come.***

With the remark *but I'll come* Jane effectively cancels the implicature that she won't come to the party.

Entailment is a related but distinct phenomenon and it belongs in the realm of semantics, because it is not affected by the context. If one proposition entails another, this works in the same way as a logical condition of the form IF X THEN Y. For example *The president was assassinated* entails *The president is dead*. If the first utterance is true, the second one is automatically also true - one proposition logically follows the other one.

Illocution and perlocution

We use the terms illocution and perlocution to describe the meaning a speaker wants to convey with an utterance and the interpretation that a hearer forms when hearing it.

locution = the content of the utterance itself

illocution = the meaning intended by the speaker

perlocution = the interpretation of the message by the hearer

Mismatches between illocution and perlocution are what we generally describe as misunderstandings.

Speech Acts

When language is used by human beings in real-life situations, there are generally communicative goals associated with every utterance. Speakers express their emotions, ask questions, make requests, commit themselves to actions - they *do things* with words. The term **speech act** is used to describe such language actions. A wide range of utterances can qualify as speech acts.

Common Speech Acts

Speech act	Function
Assertion	conveys information
Question	elicits information
Request	(politely) elicits action
Order	demands action
Promise	commits the speaker to an action

Threat intimidates the hearer

There exist several special syntactic structures (sentence forms) which are typically used to mark some speech acts.

Sentence form	Example
Declarative	<i>He is cooking the chicken</i>
Interrogative	<i>Is he cooking the chicken?</i>
Imperative	<i>Cook the chicken!</i>

Consequently there are typical association between Sentence Form and Speech Act.

Sentence Form	Speech Act
Declarative	Assertion
Interrogative	Question
Imperative	Order or Request

Direct and indirect speech acts

In everyday situations, we often do not directly express what we intend, but instead formulate our utterances in ways which appear more **polite** to hearers. Compare the utterances *Pass me the salt!* and *Could you pass me the salt?* Both are in effect requests, but the first one, phrased as an imperative, has a different connotation than the second, which uses the form of a question. It's obvious to us from experience that *Could you pass me the salt* is not actually a question about the ability of the addressee to pass the salt, but a prompt to action, and responding to this prompt simply by saying *Yes, I could* and not acting would not be an appropriate reaction. *Could you pass me the salt?* has two pragmatic levels. On the surface level it is a question, but underlying this is a request. It therefore qualifies as an **indirect speech act**, whereas *Pass me the salt!* is a **direct speech act**.

Felicity Conditions

Speech acts (whether direct or indirect) can be classified according to their **felicity**. Speech acts are **infelicitous** (meaning they don't work as intended) when certain essential requirements are not met. A speech act is infelicitous when the utterance is illogical (*I promise to call you last year*), when certain requirements aren't met (*I will buy you a Porsche, honey*) or when the speaker is lying (*I really like your new jacket*). Note that there is a subtle

difference between the three examples. The first one can never 'work' (i.e. be felicitous), because it is inherently illogical. The second one may work or not, depending on whether the speaker can afford to buy her partner a Porsche - something she might not know for sure herself at the time of making the utterance. The third one is a flat-out lie (in this example) - the speaker does not like the listener's new jacket. Felicity conditions are determined by context and especially performative speech acts often require a number of contextual conditions in order to be felicitous.

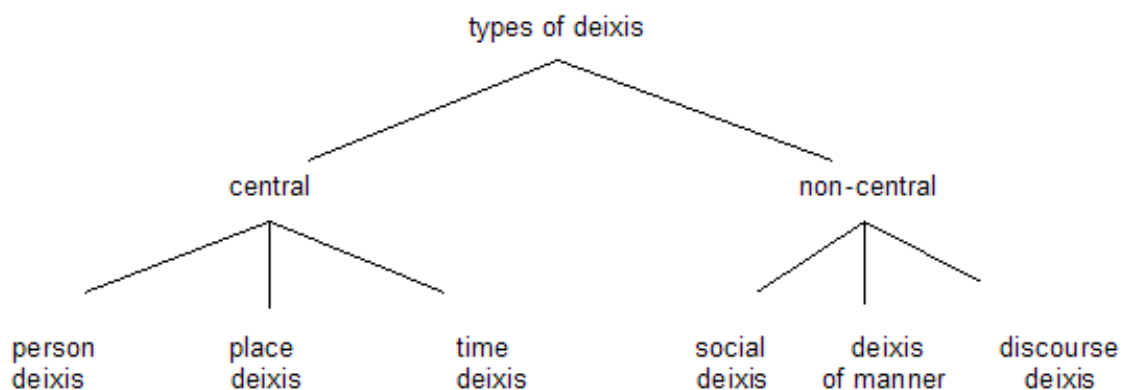
Context and co-text

Pragmatics enables us not only to describe verbal actions (speech acts) plausibly, but it also allows us to account for language phenomena which exemplify the close connection between linguistic signs and the settings they are used in. The term context can be broken down into two categories for that purpose

- the world around us, the situation in which a piece of discourse happens (**context**)
- the surrounding discourse - what was previously said (**co-text**)

The linguistic phenomena of **deixis** and **anaphora** serve to illustrate the difference between context and co-text. While deictic expressions point to something in the context, anaphoric expressions stand as replacements for something that has occurred in prior discourse.

Types of deixis



Central types of deixis include

- person e.g. *I, you*
- place e.g. *here, there, near, far, left, right, come, go*
- time e.g. *now, soon, then, today, yesterday, tomorrow, next, last*

Non-central types of deixis are

- social e.g. *Sir, Madam, Mr. President, Your Honor*
- manner and degree e.g. *this (big), so (fat), like this, etc. (accompanied by gestures)*
- discourse e.g. *this story, as mentioned above, this chapter, therefore*

Reading

Kortmann, Bernd (2005). *English Linguistics: Essentials*. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag. Ch. 7

Yule, George (2006). *The Study of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 11.

Advanced Reading

Horn, Laurence R. & Ward, Gregory (Eds.). (2004). *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Malden: Blackwell.

Levinson, Stephen C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Verschueren, Jeff (1999). *Understanding Pragmatics*. London: Arnold.

WWW

SIL Glossary of Linguistic Terms:

<http://www.sil.org/linguistics/GlossaryOfLinguisticTerms/WhatIsPragmatics.htm>

Chapter 7: Discourse Analysis

by Heidrun Dorgeloh

Discourse analysis is one of the disciplines that deals with the study of language use and it therefore in part overlaps with pragmatics. But it is also about how sentences, the most complex units within the **language system**, are actually put to use and combined with each other, i.e. are used as **utterances**. Most utterances we make do not come as isolated sentences, but as longer stretches of language use, i.e. as **text** and **discourse**. In fact, the term 'discourse' has come to be used to refer to all units of language *use* whatsoever (even discourse over longer stretches of time, such as a political or scientific discourse relating to one particular topic), and with that integrates many aspects of the situational and socio-cultural **context** of utterances. By contrast, it is the notion of 'text' that puts the emphasis on the linguistic unit that is larger than a single sentence and therefore studies more of the **co-text** of an utterance. In that sense text can be seen as a subcategory of discourse: "A text is a passage of discourse which is **coherent** with respect to the context of situation [...]; and it is coherent with respect to itself, and therefore **cohesive**" (Halliday & Hasan. 1976. *Cohesion in English*). Many elements in a language mark this textual **cohesion**, while others contribute to its overall **coherence** with regard to its context, especially the background knowledge on the part of the hearer or established by prior co-text. In particular, this concerns the appropriate "packaging" of our messages within a text, also known as **information-structuring**. While the lexical and grammatical devices a language has to offer to establish cohesion and coherence apply to spoken as well as written discourse, other principles of textual organisation are only found in spoken, interactive discourse; their analysis is grounded in a separate discipline termed **conversation analysis**.

Cohesion

Cohesion refers to relationships between the linguistic elements in a text, i.e. between words, phrases, and clauses, and other, the so-called **cohesive devices**, such as pronouns and conjunctions (serving, then, as textual connectors), or other words and phrases that co-occur with or can be left out due to previous text. Cohesive relationships can thus take the form of **co-reference**, **conjunction**, collocation (more often referred to as **lexical cohesion**), **substitution**, and **ellipsis**. Cohesive devices may also reflect the semantic and pragmatic relations between sentences, paragraphs and even longer stretches of a text; typical discourse relations of this kind are additive, temporal, causal, and adversative.

Coherence

While cohesion (or internal coherence) is in most kinds of discourse a necessary condition for textuality, it is in principle never sufficient. In the first place a text has to have (external) coherence, i.e. it has to be consistent with the discourse situation in which it takes place. This implies:

- having a recognisable **discourse topic**
- having a recognisable **discourse function**, and
- having a plausible **discourse structure**.

If coherence of this kind does not show up overtly in the text (i.e. via cohesion), it usually comes about through **mutual knowledge** that both the speaker/writer and the hearer/ reader share; this knowledge constitutes a part of our general **world knowledge**, organised in

structures such as **frames**, **scripts**, and **schemata**, and serves as **background knowledge** for the establishment of coherence.

Information structure

From a discourse and with that from a communicative perspective, sentences within a text consist of two pieces of information, i.e. one part of the sentence (more often than not its subject) is what the sentence is about, i.e. its **topic**, while what is said about this topic is the **comment** within the clause. The most important, i.e. the most informative, part of this comment is called the sentence **focus**. These categories therefore describe the **communicative structure** of an utterance; in part, they overlap with the **information structure** within a sentence, i.e. with the fact that certain parts of it contain information that is already familiar to the hearer/ reader and therefore **given**, while other parts are relatively **new** and then usually constitute the most relevant part of the utterance at a particular point of the discourse. In English, it is the unmarked organisational principle to put the given information first and the new information at the end of the sentence. In this way, the focus of a message usually occurs in end-position; this principle is referred to as **principle of end-focus**. Since this newer, more informative part of the sentence is usually also longer and syntactically more complex, it is also called the **principle of end-weight**.

Non-canonical constructions as discourse strategies

English being an analytic language with a fixed, canonical word order (SVO) leaves little room for marking textual coherence and information structure through word order variation. There are, however, certain syntactic constructions which help to follow the above-mentioned principles of communicative and information structure; their occurrence in a text is usually motivated by the discourse conditions in a text, which is why they can be said to function as **discourse strategies**. Notable constructions are the [passive](#), [clefting](#) constructions, the [fronting of sentence elements](#), as well as the **inversion** of the subject and the main verb.

Conversation analysis

Apart from these general principles of discourse organisation that apply to both spoken and written discourse, some organisational principles govern only in interactive, which is usually spoken, **conversational discourse**. Most notably, conversations follow a pattern whereby speakers regularly "take turns"; this principle is referred to as **turn-taking** in conversation. Within this overall conversational pattern, a range of other governing principles has been observed, such as strategies for **getting and holding the** (conversational) **floor** at adequate **transition relevance places** (TRPs), following the appropriate sequencing of verbal actions in various kinds of **adjacency pairs** (such as question/answer pairs, pairs of greetings, etc.), as well as the proper insertion of **opening** and **closing sequences** which indicate that and where conversations start and end. Other conversational devices that occur throughout most interactive discourse are **repairs** and re-starts, through which conversationalists respond to actual or potential upcoming difficulties, **pausing**, as well as a range of linguistic expressions that serve as **hedges** (i.e. mitigating the strength of an utterance, by using modal auxiliaries, for example) or **politeness** expressions rather than carrying proper information.

Reading

Finegan, Edward (2004). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. Ch. 8.

Paltridge, Brian. 2006. *Discourse Analysis*. London: continuum, Ch. 5+6.

Yule, George (2006). *The Study of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 12.

Advanced Reading

Georgakopoulou, Alexandra-Dionysis Goutsos (2004). *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Renkema, Jan (2004). *Introduction to Discourse Studies*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Schiffrin, Deborah (1994). *Approaches to Discourse*. Blackwell.

Chapter 8: Sociolinguistics

by Markus Krabbe

Sociolinguistics is the study of variation in speaker groups and variation in language use. **Social factors (variables)** and their influence on language use are at the core of sociolinguistic research. When connecting the study of sociolinguistics to that of language change, an influence of social factors on languages' structures may also be traced.

Sociolinguistics accounts for the influence of these factors, such as age, social class or sex, on the way we speak or write, on the linguistic structures we use and on how individuals or groups deviate from what may be called the **standard** use of language.

Sociolinguistics thus accepts and evaluates the fact that language is part of speakers' identities and how thus identity and in-group aspects influence language, just as specific contexts do.

Standard Language

Before looking at variation in language and **varieties** in more detail, an account of what actually is "a" or "the" standard that we commonly employ to compare varieties to needs to be presented. A standard must be understood as a variety of a language that is special with regard to a number of factors: it is (usually) encoded in grammars and dictionaries; it is used in what is called **elaborate function**, i.e. for teaching in schools, law-making, administration or (mostly) the media; it is accepted by the language users as "the" standard. Any of these factors may of course apply to specific non-standard varieties as well, but in most cases the standard will be "qualified" by a) fulfilling most criteria and b) fulfilling them more fully than other varieties of a language. What needs to be pointed out again and again, evident as it should be, is that the standard is - from a linguistic point of view - by no means a better language or a more advanced language compared to varieties. It is merely that variety chosen to be the one standard form of a language.

Types of Variation

Variation may, generally speaking, occur on all possible levels of language. It may also be causally attributed to a variant host of factors determining variation. Some have been named before, such as social factors like age, gender and class. Speakers' regional or professional backgrounds do of course matter as well and may be just as influential as social factors.

Sociolinguists distinguish a set of types of variation that covers most factors for language variation. The most general distinction is that between variation in the individual, so-called **idiolects**, variation related to social factors, **sociolects**, regional variation, **dialects** and variation due to functional aspects, so-called **registers** or **styles**. The latter distinction is oftentimes evaluated according to degrees of formality; also the distinction between spoken and written code or register is common. There are however, alternative approaches to that pair and more often than not they are used synonymously.

One important pair of words belonging to types of variation is dialect and **accent**. This frequently leads to confusion: what then, is the difference between those two? Where accents are held to vary mainly or only on the level of pronunciation, dialects show variation on further structural levels.

One final issue to be mentioned here is the question when a dialect may be labeled a language of its own. This issue is neither to be answered easily nor unproblematic. This is not only due to the fact that a sharp-cut distinction is already difficult on a theoretical level, but becomes even more problematic on a level including factors such as politics and the relation of languages and national identities. A, not wholly serious but yet intriguing claim states that “a language is a dialect with its own parliament and army”, thus again indicating the importance of politics. Another tries to define the border between both by means of mutual intelligibility of speakers, which in turn fails when real-life politics are taken into consideration.

Modern (Sociological) Sociolinguistics

Modern, sociological, sociolinguistics began in the 1960s, initialized by a series of studies by **William Labov**, one of the leading names in the area of research. In contrast to prior, “classical” **dialectology**, which was focused on research of **dialects** in rural areas, modern sociolinguistics focuses on social factors mentioned above, such as age, gender, social class, and their influence on language use. One of Labov’s most famous studies and a ground-breaking one for the field was his so-called “New York department store” study. Labov investigated the connection between social classes and the specific **linguistic variants (rhotic and non-rhotic pronunciation)** of a **linguistic variable (rhoticity)** used by members of those classes, establishing empirical proof for the connection between the two.

One central problem in all sociolinguistic research is the **observer’s paradox**. Whereas Labov could still rely on comparably natural data from **unmarked interview situations**, modern research is bound to certain rules, e.g. the obligation to inform participants and to ask them for permission to use their data. Thus it is more difficult and maybe even impossible to gather fully “natural” data, that is data that reflects language use as it would be in a natural setting. As soon as speakers know they are being watched, they are likely to make at least slight changes in their use of language, even if they may be unconscious, and subsequently researcher’s data are affected. The same phenomenon may be illustrated by reference to a person accidentally passing by a (TV) camera. That person is likely to change his or her behavior, the way they walk and their posture, as soon as they suspect being caught on camera.

Variation in English(es)

Another topic connected to sociolinguistics, if not as immediately as Labov’s study described above, is variation in English or in the Englishes of the world.

English has long since the beginnings of its spread around the globe (from roughly the 17th century on) become what we call a **pluricentric** language that is actually a number of languages sharing the same name. By now most researchers have accepted that indeed English as spoken in Singapore is not necessarily dependent on Australian or Scottish English. Apart from their common ancestors, these **World Englishes** have become rather independent from another.

As the focus in English linguistics is oftentimes on American and British English, the standard varieties of these two countries will be used to exemplify diversity in Englishes worldwide.

Before looking at the differences, a brief description of both standard variants will be helpful:

In England the standard variant is **Received Pronunciation** (RP), it is a regionless variety of British English commonly held to be of high prestige and thus a social variety. It is spoken only by a minority, but still labelled standard. Alternative labels are “Queen’s English” or “Oxford English”. In the U.S. we have **General American** (GA), which is spoken in the central Atlantic states (NY; NJ, Wisconsin asf.) but not in: NYC, NE. GA-speakers are perceived as accentless by most Americans. GA is a regional variety and spoken by a comparably (relative to RP) large number of speakers.

For the illustration of the differences between both varieties of English, we shall focus on a few examples from important areas of variation. The first and likely most obvious is pronunciation. A commonly known difference is in **rhoticity**. Most American varieties show a retroflex [r] in word-final position in words such as *car* and *near* and also preceding a consonant as in *card* and *beard*, whereas many British varieties, including RP, do not. Another “classic” example is the so-called flap. When [t] occurs between a stressed and an unstressed vowel, Americans usually pronounce it as a flap [ɾ] and as a result, *latter* and *ladder* are pronounced the same. In grammar, some noun phrases that denote locations in time or space take an article in American English (AmE) but not in British English (BrE): “in the hospital” vs. “in hospital”. Also, American English tends to regularize verb forms: *learned* versus *learnt*. Finally, there are differences in vocabulary and orthography; differences in the prior may be traced across the lexicon, so a couple of samples shall suffice: compare AmE “can” vs. BrE “tin” or “flashlight” and “torch”. As for orthography, see differences in spelling between AmE “labor” and “curb” vs. BrE “labour” and “kerb”.

It is thus evident that both Englishes have developed along their own paths and it is likely that this will go on. The same holds true for other Englishes, so that assuming that all World Englishes were mere varieties of a monocentric, British English would be insensible.

Reading

Finegan, Edward (2004). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. Ch. 10 + 11.

Kortmann, Bernd (2005). *English Linguistics: Essentials*. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag. Ch. 8.

Yule, George (2006). *The Study of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 20 + 21.

Advanced Reading

MacMahon, April (2002). *Understanding Language Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

For samples of British Dialects in recording: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/>

Chapter 9: Historical Linguistics and History of English

by Markus Krabbe

The current chapter looks at two related areas: the **diachronic** study of language in general, i.e. **historical linguistics**, on the one hand, and the history of the English language, on the other, with focus clearly on the latter. Interest shall first be directed at historical linguistics as such and at a nutshell description of what it is that diachronic linguistics study.

Historical Linguistics – the field

Historical linguistics looks, as the name suggests, at language and its history, that is at earlier stages of language development and at processes leading to change and finally to language as we have it today. Its aims are twofold at least: analyzing and describing the historical status of language(s) and analyzing and describing patterns of change and development that help explain language history and also ongoing processes in language today.

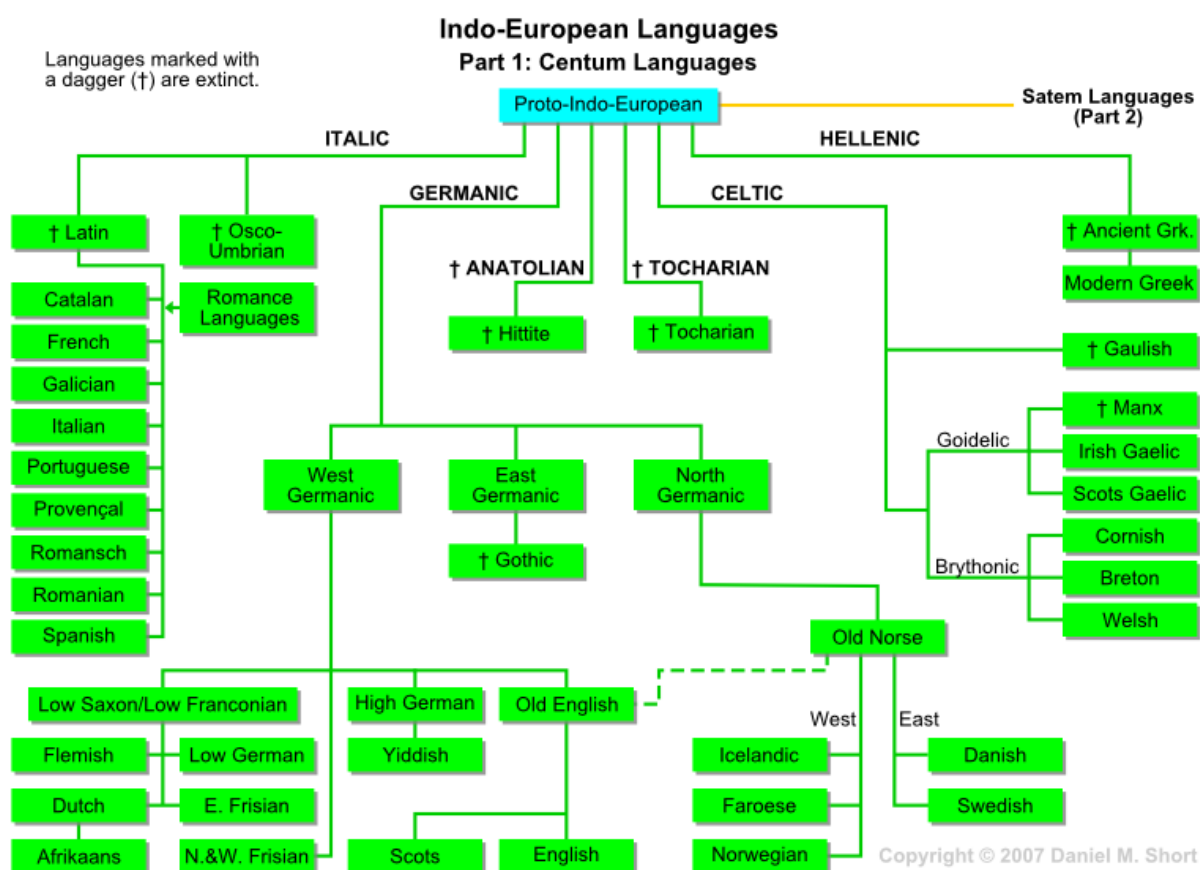
In the beginning, that is from the late 18th century on, historical linguistics was a mainly **comparative** field of study, looking at related languages, establishing **language families** by using e.g. the **family tree model** and (re-)constructing earlier stages of language based on results of comparative work. By gathering lists of **cognate words** (see below), that is words with a common root and similar form and meaning in various languages, **proto-languages** were reconstructed. Early and famous comparative work was conducted by the Englishman Sir William Jones, who compared Sanskrit and European languages, establishing the **Indo-European language family** (see image below), to which also English and German belong, both being part of the (West-)Germanic sub-branch.

Cognates in Indo-European ...

Sanskrit	English	German
PITAR	FATHER	VATER
BHRATHAR	BROTHER	BRUDER

... and in the West-Germanic sub-branch:

English	German	Dutch
THREE	DREI	DRIE
MONTH	MONAT	MAAND



Many variant branches of historical linguistics exist so that at this point we will only mention a selected sample (see bibliography for Advanced Reading). Basically, any field present in **synchronic** linguistics may also be approached from a diachronic perspective, if with at times serious setbacks caused by a lack of data. A “classic” amongst the areas of historical linguistics is the study of **etymology**, i.e. the study of the history of words. **Historical semantics** may look at words from two perspectives: the **onomasiological** approach looks at a meaning and from there moves to the connected sign (How was X expressed in the 12th century?), whereas the so-called **semasiological** approach goes from sign to meaning (What did X mean in the 12th century?). Research in this area is, like in any other historical discipline, is comparably difficult and increasingly so the further back into the history of the language we look. This is due to reduced numbers of sources and increasing limitations in accessibility. There simply are no tape recordings of language from the age of Shakespeare and there is no way to interview an Anglo-Saxon on his use of speech patterns or certain words.

The history of English

Traditionally and in fact most appropriately, the history of English is divided into four distinct periods: **Old, Middle, Early Modern and Modern English**. Old English covers a period from the second half of the first millennium to roughly around 1100, ending shortly after the **Norman Conquest**. It is a period in which English still was a dominantly **synthetic** language and it is certainly different from any English spoken since. The language of this period was influenced by and in contact (**language contact**) with Latin and what is called **Old Norse**, i.e. the language of Scandinavian seafarers and settlers. As in later stages, English lexicon at this stage of its development was (amongst other features) characterized by frequent **borrowings**

from contact languages, i.e. by taking over words from them. With the beginning of the Middle English period a change in **typology** becomes evident, which was never a question of “a few years” around the Norman Conquest but certainly a process taking a much longer time. Middle English may and is however generally labeled as being an analytic language. More careful scholars might say it is “increasingly analytic”. In Middle English we trace, next to continued and renewed Latin influences, strong influences of various predecessors of modern French: Norman dialects at an early stage and Central French influence as time went by. As a consequence we trace an ongoing expansion of the lexicon, i.e. borrowing, especially in areas influenced by the new ruling classes. Another drastic and important change starting in Middle English (around 1400), though not ending until well into, possibly even at the end of, Early Modern English (c. 1800), was the so-called **Great Vowel Shift (GVS)**. The GVS is best (though imperfectly, but see Advanced Reading) defined as a process in which *all long vowels become raised to higher and closer positions*, with “position” referring to articulation. A final and equally important process starting in the Middle English period was that of the **standardization** of the English language. As this is a long and complex story in itself, it shall suffice to say that it started even before 1400 and that it is widely finished around 1800, as well. Important stages in this process are the medieval Chancery Lane, an administrative center of a certain influence in official language use, the printing press, though with de-standardizing effects in the beginning, the first dictionaries and grammars and finally the Elementary Educational Act, though slightly after the period given above, i.e. in 1870. This is already deep inside what we call the Early Modern English period, the start of which is usually placed around 1500, that is in a time of drastic change in Europe (reformation, renaissance etc.) and after e.g. the discovery of America. EModE is also characterized by a continued and refreshed influence of Romance and Classic languages on its lexicon, due to e.g. the renaissance, and also by the continuation of both the GVS and the process of standardization. Also, the development towards an increasingly analytic language type continues. After 1750 the Modern English period begins. Again, some scholars claim earlier or later dates, a fact that is again due to all periodization being a mere means of structuring a long history and basically any date being more or less arbitrary and disputable. Still, most drastic change phenomena are widely finished by this time and English has taken a shape that makes it look much like the English we know today. However, the journey of English continues as you read, as change is an ever present facet of language.

Keywords

Analytic:	A linguistic typology depending on word order to express syntactic relations. Prototypically displays no inflections.
Borrowing:	
Cognate words:	Words in related languages with related form and meaning and said to have a common origin.
Comparative Analysis:	Method of analysis comparing two or more languages, dialects etc.
Diachronic:	Studying language and its development through time.
Etymology:	The study of the history and origin of words.
Family tree model:	An illustrative model indicating relationships between languages in varying degrees.

Great Vowel Shift:	A process of changing articulation in English taking place roughly between 1400 and 1800. All long vowels were moved to a higher, closer articulation.
Historical linguistics:	Branch of linguistics studying historical aspects of language. Theoretically any branch of linguistics, from phonology to pragmatics, can be subject to historical research.
Historical semantics:	The diachronic study of semantics.
Indo-European languages:	A language family including, among others, Italic and Germanic languages. English and German, but also Dutch and Afrikaans are part of the latter, i.e. Germanic, branch.
Language Contact:	
Language families:	A means of categorizing related languages. Dependent on reconstructions of earlier, “ancestor” language stages, the “parents” of later stages.
Norman Conquest:	The conquest of Anglo-Saxon England by the Normans led by William the Conqueror in and after 1066.
Old Norse:	A north Germanic language spoken in Scandinavia and by Scandinavian seafarers and settlers in England until c. 1300.
Old, Middle, Early Modern and Modern English:	
	The four traditional periods in the history of English.
Onomasiological:	An approach to the study of signs, going from meaning to sign.
Proto-languages:	The oldest ancestor of languages forming a language family, also called “Ursprache”. Partly reconstructed via comparative analyses.
Semasiological:	An approach to the study of signs, going from sign to meaning.
Standardization:	
Synchronic:	Studying language at a fixed point (or short period) in time.
Synthetic:	A linguistic typology depending on inflections to express syntactic relations. A high morpheme-per-word ratio is typical.
Typology:	A means of describing structural features of languages, e.g. analytic, synthetic or agglutinative.

Reading

Finegan, Edward (2004). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. Ch. 13 + 14.

Yule, George (2006). *The Study of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 19.

Advanced Reading

Baugh, Albert C. & Cable, Thomas (2002). *A History of the English Language*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Crystal, David (2005). *The Stories of English*. London: Penguin.

Jucker, Andreas H. (2000). *History of English and English Historical Linguistics*. Stuttgart: Klett.

For facsimiles of some OE texts:

<http://www.rosenkilde-bagger.dk/Early%20English%20Volumes.htm>

For some OE texts read aloud:

<http://www.readingoldenglish.com/>