

03.09.2019

Approach towards Language Universals

Chomskyan vs Greenbergian

Chomsky

- Mentalism
- Data: 1
- Degree of abstractness: X-bar. The abstraction is very high.

General Notes on Chomsky: He talks about language innateness, having a Universal Grammar. Based on the fact that all kids learn languages the same way.

Greenberg

- Behaviourism
- Data: 300+
- Degree of abstraction: Surface structure

Universals given by Greenberg Can be word order, or placement of adjuncts, or at the morphology level.

We will be looking at his 44 Universals later.

Word Order:

- Syntactic
 - No language is 100% of one type
 - Most SOV languages are post-positional
- Morphology
- Phonetic

Types of Universals

1. Formal vs Substantives

Formal: language has rules, we have to follow them

Substantive: Have categories. Within nouns you may have subcategories.

2. Absolute vs Statistical

Eg: For statistical, all languages have a minimum of 3 vowels, max of 11.
Absolute: “All languages have verbs”

3. Implicational vs Non-implicational

We take 2 universals for this, that are dependent.

Eg: if a language is of **SOV** it is **post-positional**. NOT ABSOLUTE.

Notes in class

Typology vs Universals: Typology is the study of differences, classifying by studying structure and functional features. Universal is a pattern occurring universally across all languages

Competence and Performance: with the example of a baby, having a thought but unable to represent it in the language.

Berlin and Kay colour terms

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Presentation: Pick a non-Indian language that we do not know.

- Do a linguistic study, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics,
Something special about the language.
Look at causatives, relativisation. Features. Inflection etc. Lexical level or Morphology level or Syntactic level etc etc.
- Do not have to educate on difference from Indian languages or anything
- 10 Minutes to do the presentation.
- 8-12 pages: the report/term paper.
- Bonus: Extra effort
- Apply the study of two months to the target language constantly.

Referring to Emeneau's Paper: Read **Masica**

- This paper refers to numerals and classifiers
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Language Universals: Formal and Substantive

We have:

Formal - Substantive

Absolute - Tendencies

Implicational - Non-Implicational

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Manish Sir is taking the class.

Writing Systems

- First writing systems? Would you consider pictures to be writing system
- Like a language, a writing system needs to be productive
- Conveying an idea is one part of writing. There will be rules.
- Why does language and writing have to be connected?
- Brings up: speech, language, and writing. And there is evidence that speech does not necessarily translate to written language. Eg: Chinese is a good one.
- “It should associate itself with all the capabilities of the language” - but the burden of productivity lies with the language, and the writing system is tied to the language.

Saujas: writing systems have their own productivity

Summarising

- Has to be consistent, by convention
- It's not expressing anything new. It has to do with expression of what is expressed by the language.

Ujwal: what about math?

Sir: Math is sort of a language itself, so to speak. (so to speak repeated by Saujas, sarcastically). The language itself cannot be called a language, linguistically. But considering the connection with written form, it's as expressive, productive, etc: hallmarks of a language?

Saujas: Math writing has to be unambiguous.

- Purpose of writing systems is persistency, not [missed]

Persistence of Writing?

- Speech is transient: if phonemes are missed, it's gone.
- The persistence factor of writing comes from what can be done with it.
- Written communication can allow for a more nuanced expression. Expressibility increases, spontaneity is lost
- Writing is independent of the discourse situation.
- Writing allows for time delays before responding

- Writer has freedom to express veeery vague idea
- Writing is monologue-ic. Speech is (always) dialogue, with the exception of maybe plays.
- Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance, just an aside.
- Writing reduces the load of memorization
- Writing allows for more complexity, speech allows for more nuance.
Eg: Expressing sarcasm in writing. Or appreciation.
- Writing more objective.
- Allows for higher degree of fossilization.
- Writing requires standardization

General question: Sign language

- Would sign language be a speech system/writing system?
- How to transcribe sign.

There's a lot being said about pauses, no idea how to note this

Ah yes it was about writing devices, and a segue into punctuation.

So point is: punctuation does not relate to pauses, and pauses don't necessarily relate to language too.

Looking at ideographs

- ???
- Ideographs aren't real sweaty
- How to represent new concepts in an ideographic system.
- How do we get to sound correspondence again.
- Bad pronunciations of Sayar.