Variability of languages in time and space

Lecture 3:
Basic linguistic terms

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1. Linguistic sign and the language system
   - Linguistic sign, typology of signs
   - Language system, syntagmatic and associative relations
   - Words and other signs vs. non-signs
2. Types of morphemes
   - Lexical vs. grammatical & free vs. bound
   - Allomorphs, cranberry morphs
3. Linguistic disciplines
   - Phonetics and phonology, morphology etc.
   - Morphology and syntax as grammar

Account of language in modern linguistics

**Ferdinand de Saussure** (1857–1913)

- Swiss linguist
- reconsidering methods and goals of linguistics
- courses in general linguistics at University of Geneve 1906–1911
- fundamental ideas published in **Cours de linguistique générale**
    - 1st edition 1916
        - edited by Saussure's former students Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, based on notes taken by other students
    - critical edition by Tullio de Mauro (Paris 1972)
    - En. translation *Course in General Linguistics* by Roy Harris (London 1983)
    - Cz. translation *Kurs obecné lingvistiky* by František Čermák (Praha 1989)

Saussure's term of "linguistic sign"

When communicating by language, we use *sounds* to convey *meanings*.

- The term **linguistic sign** is used for a pairing of a particular sound sequence (form) and a particular meaning.

- A linguistic sign composed of two elements:
  - *signifier* (Fr. *signifiant*)
    - **acoustic image** of the word = **form**
    - *not* the real sound
      - one can talk to oneself without articulating the words
  - *signified* (Fr. *signifié*)
    - the **concept** associated with the acoustic image = **meaning**
    - not the thing itself
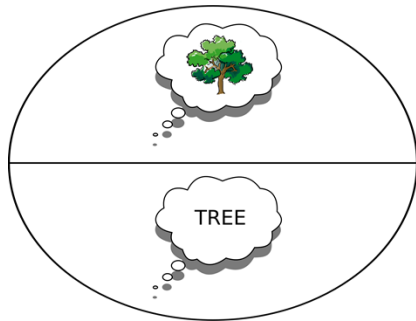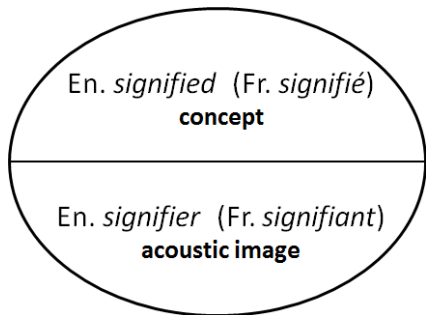
Linguistic sign in phonation and audition

- *phonation*: when producing language, the speaker thinks about the concept and produces the corresponding acoustic image
- *audition*: when hearing an acoustic image, the acoustic image unlocks the corresponding concept in the hearer's brain
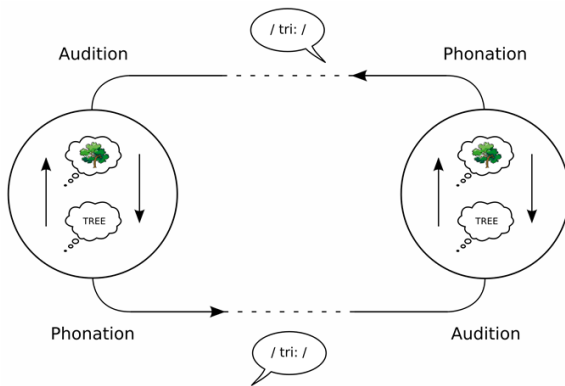
# Basic features of linguistic sign

- arbitrariness
  - the relation between the signifier and signified is **not motivated**
  - given by **convention**, thus **inseparable** when used in the language community

- linearity of the signifier
  - in time (spoken texts)
  - in space (written texts)

- portability in time and space (writings)

Linguistic sign *refers* to reality

> The **relation between the signifier and the signified** is a **relationship internal to language itself**, not a relationship between language and extra-linguistic reality.

- Linguistic signs *refer* to **objects of extra-linguistic reality = referents**.
- The relations between the signifier, the signified, and the referent are modelled by the **semiotic triangle**.
  (C. K. Ogden – I. A. Richards: *The meaning of meaning*, New York 1923)

Semiotic triangle (Ogden – Richards 1923, p. 11)
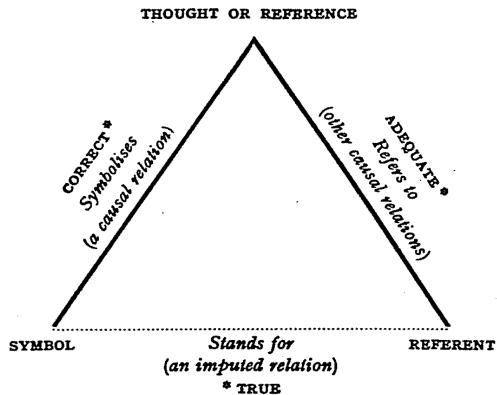
- the signifier **symbolises** the signified
- the signified **refers to** the referent
- the signifier **stands for** the referent

Linguistic and non-linguistic signs

- Linguistic signs are only one type of signs.
- In general, **signs** are things, gestures, behaviors, events etc. that **communicate a meaning**
  - examples of non-linguistic signs: photographs, traffic lights, traffic signs, laugh, a minute of silence, flags
- Signs in general are studied by **semiotics**
  - the study of linguistic signs is a subfield of semiotics
  - in some approaches, the term *semiology* is used for this subfield

Typology of signs by C. S. Peirce

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914)

- American philosopher, logician, mathematician etc.
- founder of semiotics and pragmatics
- typology of signs since the 1860s, final account 1906–1910

3 types of signs according to the **degree of arbitrariness**
between the signifier and the signified:

1. **icon** imitates an object
2. **index** (pl. indices) is in causal connection with the referent
3. **symbol** represents something else

Iconical sign

- imitates an object
- shares a quality with the object it stands for
- examples of *non-linguistic icons*
  - a portrait, no-smoking sign

- ex. of *linguistic icons*
  - En. *bang, to mew, to drop*
  - Fr. *boum, beugler, dégoutter*
  - Cz. *bác, bučet, kapat*

Indexical sign

- the sing and the referent are in causal connection
- an indexical sing points to something else than to the referent
- examples of *non-linguistic indices*
  - smoke (refers to fire)
- examples of *linguistic indices*
  - words whose referent is relative to the context:
    En. *I, today*; Fr. *je, aujourd'hui*; Cz. *já, dnes*
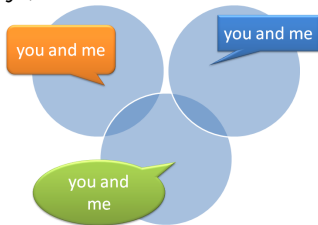
Symbolic sign

- the sign and the referent in general or conventional connection
- a symbolic sign represent something else than the referent
- examples of *non-linguistic symbols*
  - flag

- examples of *linguistic symbols*
  - En. *dog, to think*, Fr. *chien, penser*, Cz. *pes, myslet*

Langue, parole, and langage

Linguistic signs are organized into a complicated structure
= **language system (langue)**.

- **langue** (language / language system)
  - an abstract, structured system of linguistic signs
  - common code shared by speakers of a given language community
- **parole** (speech)
  - usage of the common code by different individuals
  - utterances spoken or written by the speakers of a language
- **langage** (human speech)
  - faculty which allows humans to acquire a language

– cf. dichotomy of *linguistic competence* and *performance* in Noam Chomsky's approach

Two types of relations among linguistic signs

A linguistic sign has a *value* within the language system given by its relations it has with the other units.

Linguistic signs are organized by relationships of two types:

- **syntagmatic relations**
  - F. de Saussure: relations "*in praesentia*"
  - between units present in the same sequence
- **associative (paradigmatic) relations**
  - F. de Saussure: relations "*in absentia*"
  - between units that can be substituted one for another

In de Saussure's approach, the definition of the linguistic sign is based on the **word** as a prototypical unit.

Word across languages

- Although languages differ largely in what is understood as a word, there are some general features that are valid across languages
  - the smallest unit that can form an utterance on its own
  - formally represented as a string of phonemes / graphemes, separated by pauses / white spaces
  - conveys meaning
  - can be relocated
  - cannot be interrupted by function words
  - the order of its elements cannot be changed
  - is conventionalized and reproducable in a language community

Linguistic signs and non-signs

- The concept of the **linguistic sign** is applicable to **units both smaller and larger than words**
    - morphemes
    - syntactic phrases
    - sentences
    - texts

- But there are units that do not fit the concept (**non**-**signs**)
    - syllables
    - phonemes

- the smallest distinct acoustic unit in a language
- **does not convey meaning** but
  distinguishes meaning of larger units
  - cf. different vowels used in the same context:
    En. b<u>a</u>d, b<u>e</u>d, b<u>i</u>d, b<u>o</u>d
    Czech *š<u>í</u>pky* ''rosehip', *š<u>i</u>pky* 'arrows'

  – **phonemes are not linguistic signs**
  but distinguish meaning of linguistic signs

Syllable

- unit of pronunication
- a substring in a word that can be produced in isolation
- syllable structure differs across languages
- division into syllables is a matter of *pronunication* – syllable division only *mirrored in writing*

> En. *o-mit, jump*
> Cz. *pře-sko-čit* 'to jump over', *pře-skoč* 'to jump over.imp'

- syllables are **not associated with meanings**
  - **syllables are not linguistic signs**

Morpheme

- a substring in a word which **conveys a meaning**
  - smaller than words, or identical with them
- the smallest meaningful units in language
  - **morphemes are linguistic signs**
- usually repeated in a set of words

- words are **fully decomposable** into morphemes, cf.
  - *chair* consists of 1 morpheme: *chair*
  - *chairs* consists of 2 morphemes: *chair-s*
  - *played* consists of 2 morphemes: *play-ed*
  - *player* consists of 2 morphemes: *play-er*
  - *players* consists of 3 morphemes: *play-er-s*
  - *distastefully* consists of 4 morphemes: *dis-taste-ful-ly*

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Types of morphemes

two oppositions combined:

- **lexical** vs. **grammatical** morphemes
  - a lexical morpheme has a (more or less general) lexical meaning on its own
  - a grammatical morpheme changes inflection
- **free** vs. **bound** morphemes
  - a free morpheme can stay as a single word
  - a bound morpheme cannot stand alone

Lexical morphemes: free vs. bound

lexical morphemes have a lexical meaning by themselves

- **free lexical morphemes**
  - "content words" (roots and stems)
  - *book*, *book*-s, *play*, *play*-er-s
- **bound lexical morphemes**
  - "derivational morphemes" (derivational prefixes, suffixes etc.)
  - used to form a new word
  - *book*-*ish*, *play*-*er*-s, *dis*-lik-ed

Grammatical morphemes: free vs. bound

grammatical morphemes change inflectional meaning without affecting the lexical meaning

- **free grammatical morphemes**
    - "function words"
    - *in a book, but, that, them*
- **bound grammatical morphemes**
    - "inflectional morphemes" (endings etc.)
    - used to create word forms of a given lexeme with the same lexical meaning but different inflections
    - *play-s, play-ed, play-ing; play-er-s, book-s, dis-lik-ed*

Inflectional (= bound grammatical) morphemes

- add inflectional features, do not change lexical meaning
  - $-s$ in English nouns $= +$*plural*
- possibly cummulate inflectional meanings
  - $-s$ in English verbs: $+$*3rd person* $+$*sg* $+$*present*
- occur outside derivational morphemes
  - stated as a language universal by Greenberg
  - $teach\text{-}er\text{-}\underline{s}$
- form more regular and transpratent paradigms $\rightarrow$ items are predictable

Derivational (= bound lexical) morphemes

- change the meaning and/or the part-of-speech category of words
  - *-er* in English: *verb → noun*
- have specialized meanings, added in succession
  - Czech agent suffix *-tel* and feminine suffix *-ka*: *uči-tel-ka*
- derivational suffixes occur before inflectional morphemes
  - cf. *-er* before *-s* in *play-er-s*
- form less regular and transpratent families → items harder to predict

Morpheme and allomorphs

> Morphemes can be attested in more variants. If the form varies without changing the meaning, the variants are called **allomorphs** of a morpheme.

- allomorph = realization of a morpheme in a given phonemic or graphemic context, cf.
  – allomorphs of lexical morphemes:
  tak-e, _took_
  _vz_-í-t 'to take', _vez_-m-e '(he) takes'
  od-_véz_-t 'to take away', _vůz_ 'carriage'
  – allomorphs of the past participle suffix in
  tak-_en_, re-mov-_ed_

There are morphs in languages that are attested in a single word
= **cranberry morphs**

- such a morph is found in the English word *cranberry*

- in spite of not being attested in any other word, *cran-* in *cranberry* seems to be a morph since it combines with *-berry* which is attested in other words (*blueberry, strawberry, rapsberry*)
- similarly, *-kňub-* in *nekňuba* is probably a morph as the word has the same morphemic structure as *nešika, nemluva*

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Linguistic disciplines

- **phonetics and phonology**
  - deal with sound units of a language
- **morphology**
  - studies the internal structure of words
- **word formation**
  - studies how words are coined in languages
- **syntax**
  - studies the internal structure of sentences (and inter-sentential relations)
- **semantics and pragmatics**
  - study meaning of linguistic expressions
- **lexicology, lexicography**
  - studies words in a language, their meaning and usage

- **Phonetics** and **phonology** deal with sounds of a speech.
  - **Phonetics** focuses on how sounds are produced and perceived.
  - **Phonology** deals with the inventory of sounds items as with non-sign items from which linguistic signs are formed.

  - e.g. phonetics answers the question which and how sounds are produced when pronouncing the sequence bed [ɛ]
  - phonology analyses the sequence in opposition to bad [æ] pointing out that the pair of vowels [ɛ] and [æ] has a disctinctive function in English, i.e. it differentiates the meaning of the given words

Morphology

- **Morphology** deals with the internal – morphemic – structure of words, covering morphemes that convey both inflectional and derivational meanings

  – **Inflectional morphology** and **derivational morphology** are distinguished as two subfileds of morphological research.

  - Adopting the perspective of the speaker, the task of morphology is to deal with the inventory of morphemes and possible combinations to express both types of meanings.
  - From the perspective of the hearer, morphology deals with how words are analysed into morphemes and assigned inflectional and derivational meanings.

Word formation

- Derivational morphemes are studied by **derivational morphology**, which is a part of **morphology** (besides **inflectional morphology**).
- At the same time, derivational morphemes are in focus of **word formation**, which is another linguistic discipline that studies how new words are formed.
  - in Czech and other languages esp. with rich inflectional morphology, derivation traditionally separated from inflectional morphology and thus not included in morphology (and grammar)

Syntax

- The patterns
  - – on the basis of which words are combined into larger units up to sentences (the speaker's perspective)
  - – to which sentences are analysed (the hearer's perspective)

  are subject of study of **syntax**.

    - in a cross-linguistic comparison of the sentence structure, subject, verb, and object are the most important sentence elements
    - order of these elements in simple indicative sentences is analysed across languages

Semantics and pragmatics

- **Semantics** deals with the meaning of linguistic expressions
  - units at the morphological, syntactical, and lexical level have meanings
  - usually in abstraction from the contexts in which words and sentences are uttered
- In this way, it differs from **pragmatics** which focuses on meanings that a sentence has in a perticular context in which it is uttered
  - pragmatics focuses on relations between language structures and users of the language

Semantics vs. pragmatics: an example

- Matthews (2007:313):
    - cf. *There's a car coming*
        - in syntax: an indicative sentence
        - in pragmatics: a warning (if feeling endangered) or an expression of hope (if waiting for a taxi) etc. depending on the context

Lexicology, lexicography

- **Lexicon** (mental lexicon)

  – as an inventory of words (and larger units, esp. multiword expressions, phrasemes)

  is the subject of study of **lexicology**.

  - A selection of the mental lexicon of a language is recorded in a **dictionary**.
    – principles of dictionary writing discussed in **lexicography**

Morphology and syntax as *grammar*

- Morphology and syntax subsumed under the term **grammar**
  - grammar limited to units that have meanings (to linguistic signs)
- Morphological and syntactic features considered grammatical structure of language

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