

Variability of languages in time and space

Lecture 3: Basic linguistic terms

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- *ad* the discussion on endangered languages in the previous lecture:
 - speaker: jessie little doe baird
 - lecture title: *The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project: Nine Years On from We Still Live Here: Âs Nutayuneân*
 - invited talk at the Annual Meeting of Linguistic Society of America (New Orleans / January 202):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0YoH6hyWmY&list=PLTDerU9FPSUt6USDyXW8GmKpI-yCzBnzj&index=6&t=1224s>

- 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

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Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)

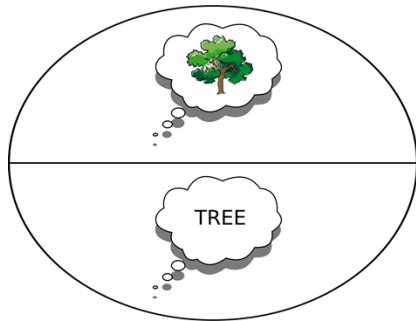
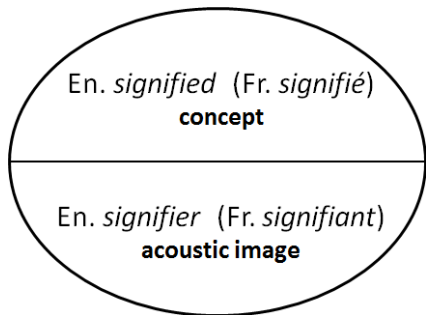
- Swiss linguist
- reconsidering methods and goals of linguistics
- courses in general linguistics at University of Geneva 1906–1911
- fundamental ideas published in **Cours de linguistique générale**
 - 1st edition 1916
 - edited by Saussure's former students Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, based 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*.

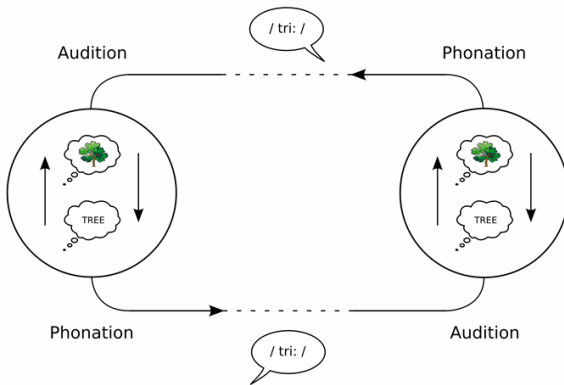
- The term **linguistic sign** is used for a pairing of a particular sound sequence (form) and a particular meaning.
- A linguistic sign composed of two elements:
 - *signifier* (Fr. *signifiant*)
 - **acoustic image** of the word = **form**
 - *not* the real sound
 - one can talk to oneself without articulating the words
 - *signified* (Fr. *signifié*)
 - the **concept** associated with the acoustic image = **meaning**
 - *not* the thing itself

Two sides of linguistic sign



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

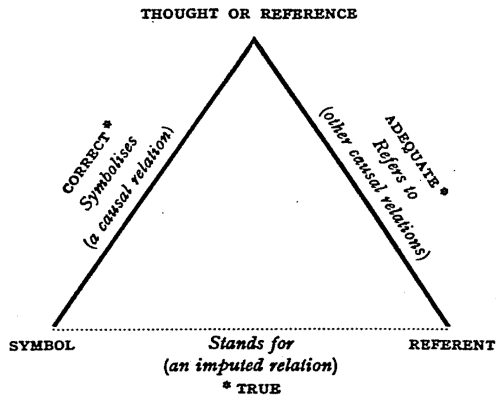
- arbitrariness
 - the relation between the signifier and signified is **not motivated**
 - given by **convention**, thus **inseparable** when used in the language community
- linearity of the signifier
 - in time (spoken texts)
 - in space (written texts)
- portability in time and space (writings)

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 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

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

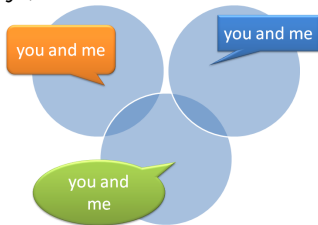
- imitates an object
- shares a quality with the object it stands for
- examples of *non-linguistic icons*
 - a portrait, no-smoking sign



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

Indexical sign

- the sign and the referent are in causal connection
- an indexical sign 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*



- 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 language

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.

- 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 reproducible in a language community

- 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. *bad*, *bed*, *bid*, *bod*
Czech *šípky* 'rosehip', *šipky* 'arrows'

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

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

- 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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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 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-er-s*
- form more regular and transpratent paradigms → 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*: *učí-tel-ka*
- derivational suffixes occur before inflectional morphemes
 - cf. *-er* before *-s* in *play-er-s*
- form less regular and transparent families → items harder to predict

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*, *raspberry*)
- similarly, *-kňub-* in *nekňuba* is probably a morph as the word has the same morphemic structure as *nešika*, *nemluva*

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- **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 distinctive function in English, i.e. it differentiates the meaning of the given words

- **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 subfields 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.

- 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)

- 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** 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 particular context in which it is uttered
 - pragmatics focuses on relations between language structures and users of the language

- 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

- **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 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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