The Linguistic Structure of Modern English

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and
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with online workbook

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The Linguistic Structure of Modern English

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Preface to the second edition

The following text gives a full introduction to English sounds, grammar, and vocabulary. It begins with a study of the distinctive sounds of English (*phonology*). It turns next to an analysis of the structure of English words and their classification (*morphology*) as well as the classification of English words and their grammatical modification. This is followed by an exploration of the meaning of English words (*lexical semantics*). The next section is taken up with a detailed analysis of English sentence structure (*syntax*) from a generative perspective. The text then looks at the interaction of syntax and semantics (*sentence semantics*) and considers the functions and contexts of language use (*pragmatics*). Finally, it outlines the role of linguistics in first- and second-language teaching and learning (*pedagogy*).

This textbook is addressed to advanced undergraduate (and graduate) students interested in contemporary English, including those whose primary area of interest is English as a second language, primary- or secondary-school English education, English literature, theoretical and applied linguistics, or speech pathology. For this reason, this textbook, unlike many other introductory linguistics textbooks, emphasizes the empirical facts of English rather than any particular theory of linguistics. Furthermore, the text does not assume any background in language or linguistics. Students are required to learn the International Phonetic Alphabet as well as the technical vocabulary of grammar and linguistics, but all necessary terms and concepts are presented in the text.

New to the 2nd edition are the following:

1. the use of authentic spoken and written English examples taken from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to exemplify features under discussion;
2. a full glossary of keys terms used in the text (indicated in text by bold-faced text);
3. an additional chapter (included in the first edition on the CD-ROM) on pedagogy;
4. new sections on cognitive semantics (Chapter 6) and politeness (Chapter 11);
5. completely updated print references;
6. web links to sites of special interest and relevance (given on the website); and
7. revised, more reader-friendly layout (including "hint" boxes and expanded "notes" on specific points)

Upon completion of this textbook and accompanying workbook, students will have acquired the following:

1. a knowledge of the sound system of contemporary English;
2. an understanding of the formation of English words and of their grammatical modification;

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3. a comprehension of the structure of both simple and complex sentences in English;
4. a recognition of complexities in the expression of meaning, on both the word and sentence level;
5. an understanding of the effects of context and function of use upon the structure of the language; and
6. an appreciation of the importance of linguistic knowledge to the teaching of English to first- and second-language learners.

The textbook is divided into twelve chapters. Chapter 1 briefly examines the discipline of linguistics and the nature of human language and grammar. After a consideration of the means of production of human speech sounds, Chapter 2 studies the consonant and vowel sounds of English and methods of their phonetic transcription. Chapter 3 continues discussion of the English sound system, considering sound combinations, stress, intonation, and syllable structure; it also examines phonological rules in English and the concept of the *phoneme* (distinctive sound of a language). Chapter 4 explores the internal structure of words, the concept of the *morpheme* (meaningful unit of a language), and the varied processes of word formation in English. Chapter 5 begins by defining the grammatical categories and looking at the grammatical modification of English words and ends with a study of the means of word classification in the language. Chapter 6 surveys a number of traditional and structural approaches to word meaning and includes a discussion of figurative language and cognitive approaches to meaning. Chapter 7 treats the syntax of the simple sentence, looking at the internal structure of the noun, adjective, adverb, and prepositional phrase, complement structures in the verb phrase, verb types, and grammatical functions. Chapter 8 continues to treat the syntax of the simple sentence, including adverbial modifiers and verb specifiers, and then examines the structure of passive, interrogative, negative, and imperative sentences. The syntax of the complex sentence is dealt with in Chapter 9, including *that*-clauses, *wh*-clauses (*wh*-questions, relative clauses, and indirect clauses), and nonfinite clauses (infinitival and participial clauses). Chapter 10 turns to the question of sentence meaning, understood in terms of thematic roles and predication analysis. Chapter 11 looks at two quite different approaches to the question of the function of language in context: information structuring and speech act theory. Chapter 12 examines the pedagogical applications of the material presented in the textbook, including the changing role of linguistics in the teaching of English; it reviews arguments both in favor and opposed to explicit grammatical instruction for native and nonnative speakers and considers the importance of grammatical knowledge for both the teacher and the learner. At the end of each chapter, students are also directed to readings that provide more detailed or enriched content on certain topics or supplemental help in understanding the content of the chapter.

A website accompanies this textbook. It includes:

1. a complete workbook with self-testing exercises. Answers for all of the self-testing exercises are provided. At relevant points in each chapter in the text, students are directed

to complete specific exercises and are advised to do so before continuing with the chapter. The exercises should provide a check on students' understanding and progress.

2. a comprehensive list of web links that expand on the information presented in the text and allow students to explore the topics more broadly on their own.

The website can be found at the following address: http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/z.156.workbook

1. A note to the student on punctuation

Various punctuation conventions are used in this textbook with which you may not be familiar.

It is the practice to distinguish between words (or parts of words) which are "mentioned" rather than used. Using words is what we do whenever we speak, but mentioning words is what we do when we refer to words as words or to the forms of words, rather than evoking their meanings. For example, try reading the following sentences:

> The word paper has five letters. Court has several different meanings. The feminine suffix -rix is almost obsolete. The clause whatever you do is an indefinite relative clause.

You may have had some difficulty reading these sentences. The reason for your difficulties is that these sentences contain word forms which are mentioned rather than used. The convention in printed texts is to italicize these mentioned forms, as follows:

> The word *paper* has five letters. *Court* has several different meanings. The feminine suffix *-rix* is almost obsolete. The clause *whatever you do* is an indefinite relative clause.

Note that this convention makes these sentences much easier to read. (In handwriting, mentioned forms are underlined.) Italics also denote all linguistic forms which are set off as example sentences. For example, below are two structurally ambiguous sentences:

> *Visiting relatives can be tiresome.*
> *Flying planes can be dangerous.*

This use of italics differs from the use of quotation marks to repeat the exact words of a spoken or written text, e.g. "convention" occurs two times in the previous paragraph.

Single quotation marks are used to give the meaning or gloss for a word; e.g. the word *garrulous* means 'tiresomely talkative'.

When the actual sound of the word is being referred to, the International Phonetic Alphabet is used. To distinguish such representations from regular writing, they are enclosed in slashes (in the case of phonemes) or square brackets (in the case of allophones), e.g.:

> The word *read* is pronounced /rɛd/ or /rid/.
> The "t" sound in *top* is pronounced [tʰ].

Another convention in linguistic works is the use of capitals to denote all the forms of a single word, thus WORK stands for *works, work, working, worked.* Capitals are also used for phonological and semantic features. These usages will be explained in more detail within the text.

2. A note on the use of corpus examples

This text makes use of authentic examples from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA): http://www.americancorpus.org/, the largest freely-available corpus of English containing over 400 million words and updated every 6–9 months. Examples in COCA come from a large variety of spoken and written text, equally divided among spoken texts (such as television), fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic works. The corpus is easily searched electronically in a variety of ways, e.g. by individual words, phrases, or collocations or by genre (e.g. fiction, academic text). This corpus was compiled by Mark Davies of Brigham Young University, who designed its search engine and maintains the site.

A corpus lists all possible examples or "tokens" of a word as it occurs in source texts. For example, when searching for the term *linguistics*, one finds over 600 examples, including the following:

A month ago, he'd been finishing up his Ph.D. in Linguistics at UC Berkeley. (COCA:FIC)

With the waning of Noam Chomsky's long dominance in linguistics, other scholars are increasingly applying the principles of evolution to the field. (COCA:NEWS)

This is why researchers in applied linguistics are recommending new strategies to fill the gaps in vocabulary – for instance, massive rote word learning, guessing word meanings by context, and using graded textbooks. (COCA:ACAD)

They're using lot more with the Internet, they're bringing in visiting instructors, and they're using professors from other fields like political science or history or linguistics who can also teach language courses. (COCA:SPOK)

Note that the source of each citation is designated by the name of the corpus and the genre in which it occurs (e.g. COCA:FIC designates an example taken from a fictional text in COCA). Students are encouraged to explore the corpus on their own, which requires free registration. A tutorial on its use is included on the COCA website.

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Chapter 1

The nature of language and linguistics

1. The nature of human language
2. The nature of grammar
3. Linguistics and the components of language
4. Organization of the book

Chapter preview

The chapter begins by looking at the nature of human language, starting from certain fundamental beliefs concerning the naturalness, power, and function of language and moving towards a more scientific analysis of human language as a system of arbitrary vocal signs, having the qualities of universality, innateness, and creativity. Particular attention is given to the rule-governed nature of language. Language is also seen as uniquely human. The ambiguous term *grammar* is then defined and a number of fallacies concerning grammar are disputed, for example, that one type of grammar is simpler than another, or that changes in grammar involve deterioration in a language. Finally, the discipline of linguistics is examined, with its division in five components, corresponding to the levels of language: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

Commentary

1. The nature of human language

Linguists understand language as a system of arbitrary vocal signs. Language is rule-governed, creative, universal, innate, and learned, all at the same time. It is also distinctly human. We will look at what is meant by each of these terms in some detail, but before doing so, let's briefly examine some preconceptions about language that a student might bring to the study of language.

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