Welcome to English Linguistics!

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Introduction to English Linguistics (I)

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I. What is language? (284–316)

1. Language

1.1 Language and Humanness

• universality, early maturation, profundity of grammatical rules

• Ki Kongo *kintu* (vs. *muntu*)

• Greek *nepios* (*ne* ‘no’ + *pios* ‘speak’)
1.2 Definition:
“a form of communication that is nonstereotyped and nonfinite; that is, it is learned and creative”
(Crane et al. 1981)
1.3 Functional Characteristics

- informativeness
- emotiveness
- social interaction (phatic communication)
- power of sound, control of reality
- instrument of thought
2. Linguistic Knowledge

unawareness of rules
(e.g. rules of relative clauses):

"My goddaughter who was born in Sweden and who now lives in Iowa is named Disa, after a Viking queen."
2.1 Knowledge of the Sound System

- sounds in/out of inventory
  (샬라샬라… jalapeño…)

- sound sequences
  (Nkrumah, Nguyen, knee…)

    (Nkrumah, Nguyen, knee…)}
2.2 Knowledge of Words

- arbitrary relation of form and meaning
  \( (\text{pterodactyl},...) \)

- conventionalization of mimetic/iconic signs (gestures for 'come, eat, go, bye'...)

![Image of a man giving a handshake](image)
- sound symbolism, onomatopoeia
  (murmur, buzz, cock-a-doodle-doo, kukkokiekuu, 꼬꼬댁꼬꼬)

- gl- (related to 'sight'):
  (glare, glint, gleam, glitter, glossy, glaze, glance, glimmer, glimpse, glisten...)
  cf. gladiator, glucose, glory, glutton, globe...
2.3 The Creativity of Linguistic Knowledge
– creative production

“Thank you very much for stepping on my toes, because I was afraid I had elephantiasis and now that I can feel them hurt I know I don't.”
- understanding of novel sentences

"Daniel Boone decided to become a pioneer because he dreamed of pigeon-toed giraffes and cross-eyed elephants dancing in pink skirts and green berets on the wind-swept plains of the Midwest."
- **rule-based productivity**

"This is the house." >
"This is the house that Jack built." >
"This is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built." >
"Bob says that this is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built." >
"Prof. Rhee gave an example, "Bob says that this is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built."" >...

"The old, old, old, old, old, old, old man came." 
"I am very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very sorry."
A big question:

• Is memorization and storage theory viable?
2.4 Knowledge of Sentences and Nonsentences

(a) John kissed the little old lady who owned the shaggy dog.
(b) Who owned the shaggy dog John kissed the little old lady.  
   < ungrammatical
(c) John is difficult to love.
(d) It is difficult to love John.
(e) John is anxious to go.
(f) It is anxious to go John.  
   < ungrammatical
(g) John, who was a student, flunked his exams.
(h) Exams his flunked student a was who John.  
   < ungrammatical
Use of asterisk (\*) for nonsentences
(= ungrammatical sentences):

*The books is interesting.

(a) What he did was climb a tree.
(b) *What he thought was want a sports car.
(c) Drink your beer and go home!
(d) *What are drinking and go home?
(e) I expect them to arrive a week from next Thursday.
(f) *I expect a week from next Thursday to arrive them.
(g) Linus lost his security blanket.
(h) *Lost Linus security blanket his.
3. Linguistic Knowledge and Performance

- Appropriateness.

Very long sentences are theoretically possible but not probable.

linguistic competence

vs.

linguistic performance
comprehension relatively unproblematic

"We invalidate the challenged lifetime ban because we hold as a matter of federal constitutional law that a state initiative measure cannot impose a severe limitation on the people's fundamental rights when the issue of whether to impose such a limitation on these rights is put to the voters in a measure that is ambiguous on its face and that fails to mention in its text, the proponent's ballot argument, or the state's official description, the severe limitation to be imposed."
• non-linguistic limitations 
  (physiological, psychological)

  – running out of breath, losing track, 
    listener's fatigue/boredom...

  – stammering, pausing, slips of the tongue...
Linguistic knowledge is largely not conscious knowledge, and the linguistic system is acquired with no conscious awareness.

Human's ability to speak and understand, and to make judgments about the grammaticality of sentences, reveals our knowledge of the rules of our language, which represents a complex cognitive system.
4. Animal Language

- bird calls; bird songs; chimps etc.
Nim Chimpsky, Sarah, bee dance, dolphins
• Hockett (1960) on humans vs. animals

a. duality
b. arbitrariness
c. creativity
d. interchangeability

e. displacement

f. cultural transmission
5. Language and Thought

- Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis

Edward Sapir (1884–1939)    Benjamin Whorf (1897–1941)
• Sapir:

Humans are at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. Language influences us in seeing, hearing, experiencing, etc.
Whorf:
Language is the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity. We dissect nature along lines laid by our native languages.
- linguistic determinism (linguistic relativism)
- rhetoric
- euphemism
- PC (politically-correct)
6. What We Know about Language

a. Wherever humans exist, language exists.
b. There are no "primitive" languages.
c. All languages change through time.
d. The sound–meaning relationships are arbitrary.

e. All human languages have finite sets of basic sounds/gestures for productive combination.

f. All grammars contain rules.
g. Every spoken language includes discrete sound segment.
h. Similar grammatical categories are found in all languages.
i. There are universal semantic properties found in every language.
j. Every language has ways of negation, interrogative, commands, and of encoding future time.

k. Speakers can produce infinite sets of sentences.

l. Any child can learn any language to which he/she is exposed.
Thank you!

See you next week!