


Introduction to Linguistics

Lecture1

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- Everywhere, every day, everybody uses language. There is no human society, no matter how small or how isolated, which does not employ a language that is rich and diverse.
 - Each human language is a complex of knowledge and abilities enabling speakers of the language to communicate with each other, to express ideas, hypotheses, emotions, desires, and all the other things that need expressing.

What is Linguistics?

- The field of scholarship that tries to answer the question "How does language work?" is called *linguistics*, and the scholars who study it are called *linguists*



Simple Definition of LINGUISTICS

- Linguistics is the study of language and of the way languages work



The first principle of linguistics

- is: *Respect people's language behavior, and describe it objectively.*

What is Language?

Language is the system of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.






The Creativity Aspect of Language

- Human language is **creative**: allowing novelty and innovation is response to new thoughts, experiences, and situations

Linguistic Knowledge (competence)

- Knowledge of the Sound System: Knowing what sounds are in that language and what sounds are not.
- Knowledge of Words: Knowing the sound units that are related to specific meanings.
- Knowledge of Sentences: Knowing how to form sentences.



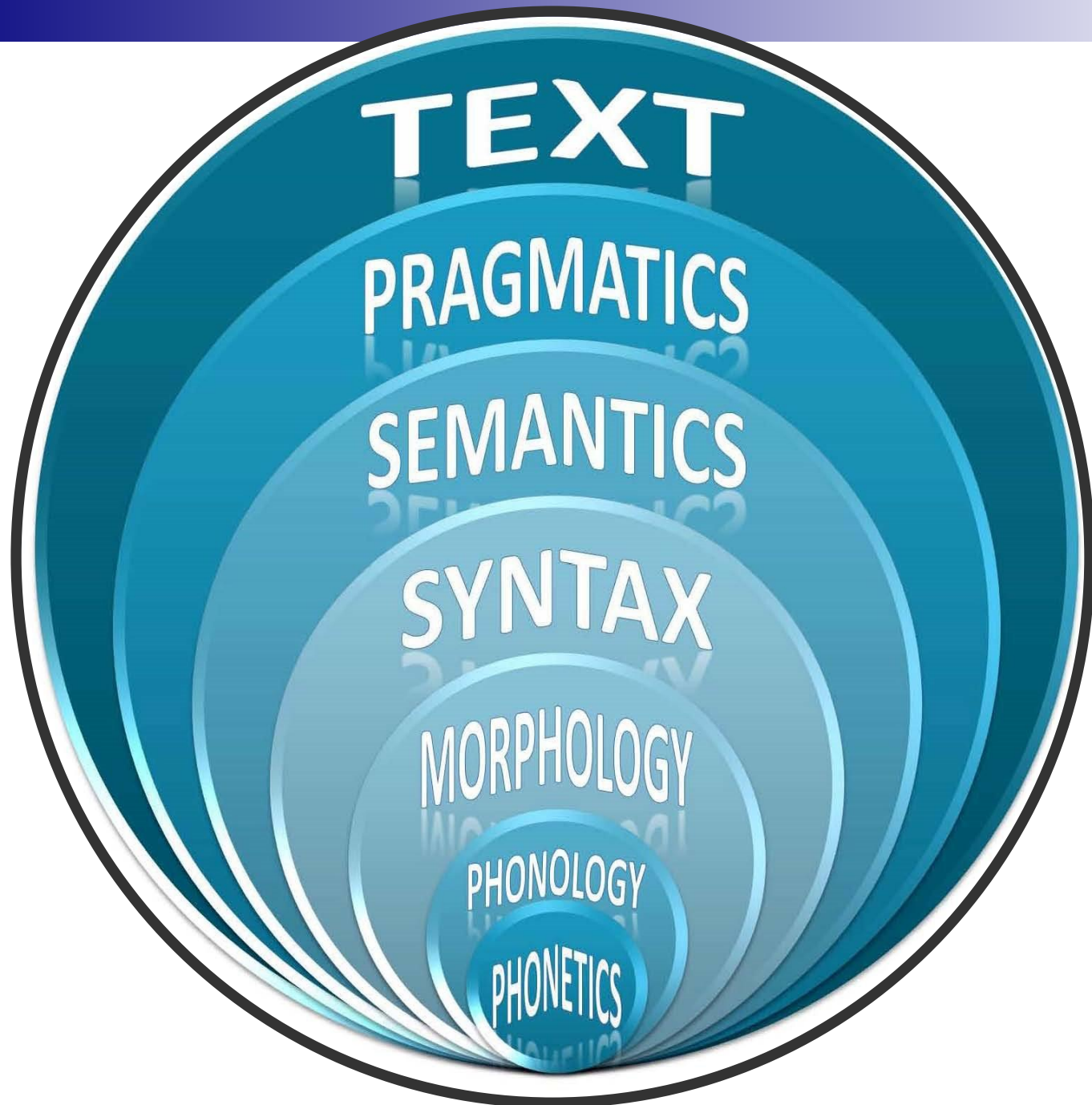
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- Linguistic Competence:
What you know about a language.

- Linguistic Performance:
How you use this knowledge in actual speech production and comprehension.



Subfields of linguistics

- Phonetics: the articulation and perception of speech sounds (physical aspects)
- Phonology: the patterning of speech sounds
- Morphology: word formation
- Syntax: sentence formation
- Semantics: the interpretation of words and sentences
- Pragmatics: how speakers use language in given contexts



Phonetics

- Phonetics is the systematic study of speech sounds of the language.
- Traditionally phoneticians rely on careful listening and observation in order to describe speech sounds. In doing this, a phonetician refers to a classificatory framework for speech sounds which is based on how they are made and on aspects of the auditory impression they make.

Phonetics: the physical nature of speech

- The first sound in English “tall” and the first sound in Spanish “tu” are similar in several respects, but they differ in that the English sound can be described as alveolar (being pronounced at the ridge behind the teeth) and aspirated (being accompanied by a puff of breath which you can feel if you hold your hand in front of your mouth when you pronounce it), while the Spanish sound is dental (being pronounced at the teeth) and unaspirated (without the puff of breath).

Phonology: the sound structure of language

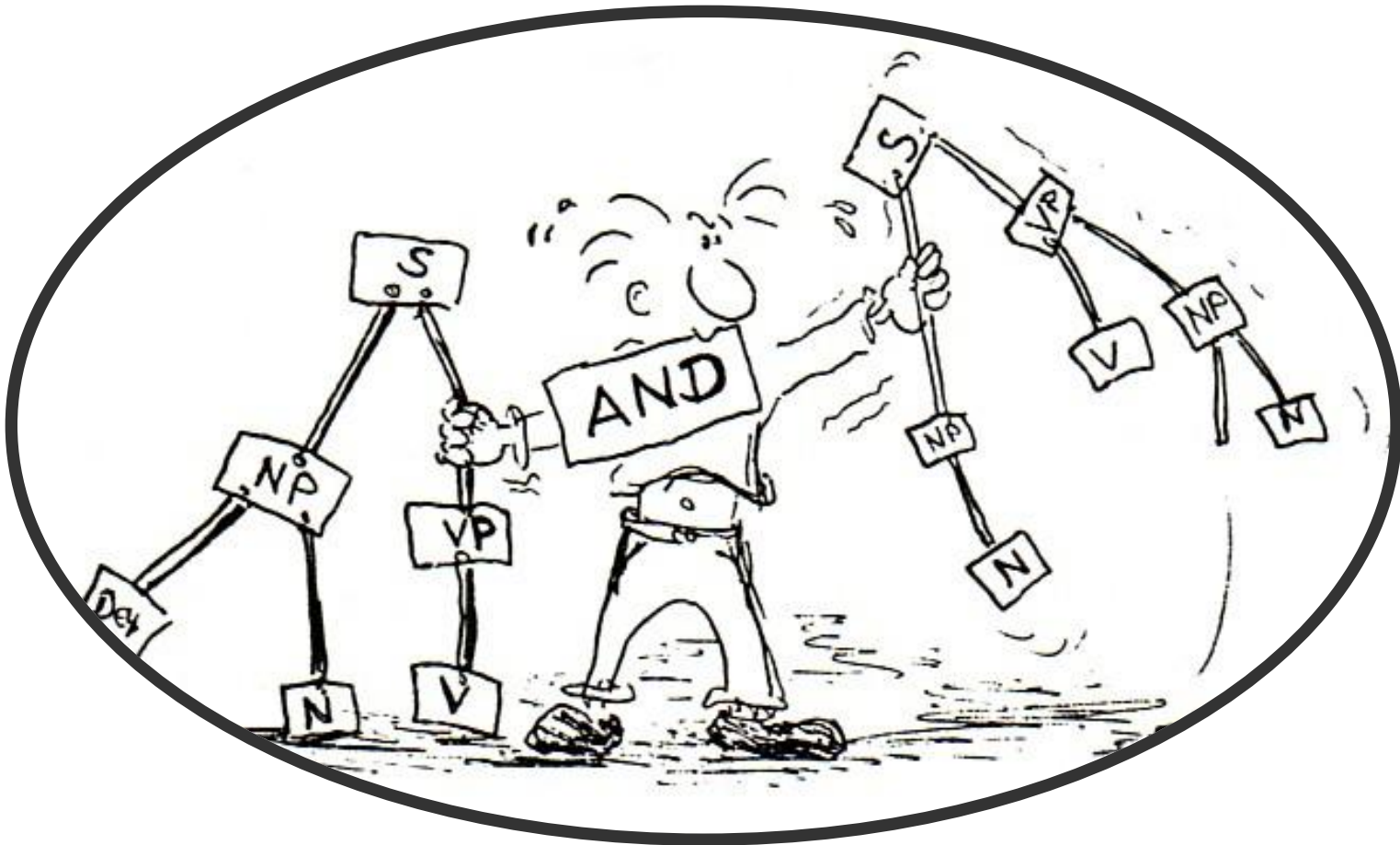
- In English, the sounds we represent as /p,t,k/ are aspirated (with the puff of breath) at the beginning of a word, as in pill, tall, kill , but not when they come after an /s/, as in spill, stall, skill. You can test this by pronouncing the pairs with your hand in front of your mouth. The difference in pronunciation is a phonetic fact, but the rule describing it is a phonological rule that describes the English sound system. There are plenty of languages that do not have this rule.

Morphology

- Morphology is the study of words. Morphemes are the minimal units of words that have a meaning and cannot be subdivided further. There are two main types: free and bound. Free morphemes can occur alone and bound morphemes must occur with another morpheme. An example of a free morpheme is “bad”, and an example of a bound morpheme is “ly.” It is bound because although it has meaning, it cannot stand alone. It must be attached to another morpheme to produce a word.

Syntax

- Syntax is the grammar, structure, or order of the elements in a language statement.



Syntax: the structure of sentences

- You can omit "that" in:
- This is the book (that) I bought.
- But not in:
- This is the book that was too expensive.

Semantics: the meaning of words and sentences

- Note that the following sentence is actually ambiguous, depending on how we interpret the relationship between words:
- For sale: an antique desk suitable for lady with thick legs and large drawers.
 - ☐ what does “thick legs and large drawers” refer to?
The desk or the lady?

Pragmatics

- Pragmatics is the study of the use of linguistic signs, words and sentences, in actual situations.






Pragmatics: how speakers use language to do things in given contexts

- These sentences can all express the same request, but often indirectly:
- It's cold in here.
- I wonder if we can shut the window.
(*Can you shut the window?*)



Relations of linguistics with other sciences

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- **Historical Linguistics**
 - **Sociolinguistics**
 - **Psycholinguistics**
 - **Ethnolinguistics (or Anthropological Linguistics)**
 - **Dialectology**
 - **Computational Linguistics**
 - **Psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics**



Historical linguistics: language and history

- How did Latin develop into the various romance languages French, Italian, Spanish, Rumanian, Portuguese, Romansch, Catalan, Occitan, Sardinian etc.?
- What did the parent of the various Germanic languages German, English, Dutch, Norwegian, Icelandic, Swedish, Danish, Icelandic, Frisian, Faeroese, Gothic etc. sound like, of which we have no written records, but which must have been spoken at around the same time as Classical Latin?




Sociolinguistics: language and social factors

- What distinguishes the dialect of Philadelphia from that of New York?
- What are the effects of mass media and personal mobility on dialect differences?




Psycholinguistics: language and the mind

- Why do people sometimes make errors in their native language?
- How do children learn the complexities of a language without formal instruction?



Computational linguistics: language and computers/computation

- Can we learn anything about human language using tools and formalisms that were developed to describe and interpret formal computer languages?
- How can we teach computers to use human language?

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- In the lectures to come, we will look at many subfields in linguistics, and become acquainted with the questions they address and some of the tools and methods they use to look for answers to those questions.