Linguistic Perspectives on English Grammar

The Linguistic Approach

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The Linguistic Approach

- Assignment #1: Send an email to tpayne@uoregon.edu with the following information (due tomorrow):
  - Your name
  - Languages you speak
    - Mother tongue
    - Others which you can speak fluently, can speak a little, can read/write, have studied, etc.
  - Previous linguistics courses
  - Plans for the future
  - What do you expect to get out of this class?

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- What comes to mind when you think of “grammar”?

To a linguist, Grammar is everything you need to know in order to speak a language.

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- Grammar (with a capital "G") as the object of linguistic investigation:

  Grammar is a bridge between mental states of individuals and the social reality of their community.
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**Fact or Fiction? Casual everyday speech is grammatically poorer than careful, formal speech.**

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**Descriptive rather than prescriptive**

Like, OH MY GOSH!
Like – TOTALLY.
Encino is like SO COOL.
There's like the Galleria.
And like all these like really great shoe stores.
I love going into like clothes stores 'n' stuff.
I like buy the neatest mini-skirts 'n' stuff.
It's like SO COOL cuz like everybody's like
Super-super nice...
It's like WAY COOL ...

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- **Like-insertion**
  - Encino is like so COOL.
  - * Encino like is so COOL.
  - * Encino is so COOL like.
  - * Like Encino is so COOL.
- This is a totally regular and consistent pattern.

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**Fact or Fiction? Non-standard varieties of English are grammatically deficient, sloppy, or illogical.**

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- Two non-standard constructions:
  a. Double negation.
     - *I didn’t do nothing wrong.*
     - *You ain’t going to no heaven.*
  b. Omission of “be”.
     - *He doing something.*
     - *She in the hospital.*

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- Fact: Double negation is not “illogical” at all:
  First, the only interpretation of *I didn’t do nothing wrong* is negative, not affirmative.
  No one is confused by this construction.
  Second, many other “standard” languages use two negative morphemes (e.g., French, Russian, Hausa . . .).
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- Fact: *be* omission occurs in certain "non-standard" varieties exactly where contraction is allowed in "standard" English:

  - He doing something. non-standard
  - He's doing something. standard
  - Yes he is. standard and non-standard
  - *Yes he.* non-standard
  - *Yes he’s.* standard

- Fact: *be* omission occurs in certain "non-standard" varieties exactly where contraction is allowed in "standard" English:

  - Who is it? standard and non-standard
  - *Who it?* non-standard
  - *Who’s it?* standard

- Fact: *be* omission, like double negation and *like* insertion follows regular grammatical patterns.

  - These are the same kinds of patterns with about the same degree of complexity as are found in the "standard" language.

  - They are useful patterns, because they allow people to communicate.

- Summary

  - All languages and language varieties are approximately equal in grammatical complexity.

  - If you are a native speaker of a language, regardless of the variety, you have a perfect internalized, unconscious grammar of that language.

  - Linguists are interested in explaining what kinds of rules people unconsciously follow, regardless of the social status of their speech.

- Pedagogical reasons:

- Scientific reasons:
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- Theory of symbolic systems
  The form-function composite:

   "Tree"

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- Terms associated with the two main parts of the form-function composite:

   "Tree"

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- How does the mind actually work?

Characteristics of Heart and Head Knowledge:

| Heart knowledge | Head knowledge |

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- The process of becoming “fluent” in an L2 is the process of moving from head knowledge to heart knowledge of the form-function composites of the L2.

   "I HE"
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- Theory
  - Another Recurring Metaphor
    - Building a message is like building a building
    - Pile of rocks:

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- Theory
  - What do you do when a rock doesn't fit?

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- Morphological expression (change the shape of a rock)
  - What's a morpheme?

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- Lexical expression:
  - Type 1: die → kill, go → went
    (also called "(strong) suppletion")
  - Type 2: deer (sg.) → deer (pl.)
    (also called "isomorphism")
  - Type 3: rise → raise
    (also called "weak suppletion.")

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- Syntactic constructions (combine rocks):
  - rise → cause to rise
  - speak → will speak
  - I like beans. → Beans I like.
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- How many morphemes are in the following words?

  dogs
  cattle
  indistinguishable
  altruistic

Concepts in Morphology

- A morpheme is an idealized mental construct. It represents the smallest piece of form that expresses meaning in a language, e.g. {cat}, {-s}, {-ed}, {leftward stress shift}.
- An allomorph is a variant, or alternate pronunciation of a morpheme, e.g. [-s], [-z] and [-iz] are all allomorphs of the plural {-s} in English.
- A bound morpheme is a morpheme that can not occur by itself - it must be attached to at least one other morpheme, e.g. the {un-} in “unkind,” the {-ly} in “happily,” or the {huckle} in “huckleberry.”

Concepts in Morphology

- A free morpheme is a morpheme that can stand on its own as a meaningful unit, e.g. {cat} or {tree}.
- An affix is a bound morpheme that expresses grammatical meaning, e.g. {-ed}, {un-}
  - A prefix is an affix that is attached to the left of a root, e.g. {un-}
  - A suffix is an affix that is attached to the right of a root, e.g. {-ed}.
  - A suprafix is a morpheme that consists of stress change only (in English), e.g., convert > convert.

Concepts in Morphology

- The root of a word expresses the main semantic content of the word, e.g. {cat} in “cats” or {happy} in “happily.” Roots cannot be further analyzed into morphemes. Some roots are bound morphemes (e.g., {huckle} in “huckleberry” or {duce} in “reduce.”). But most are free, e.g., {cat} and {tree}.
- A stem is a root plus one or more derivational affixes (see below), e.g., “reduce,” “enable,” or “intuition.”

Concepts in Morphology

- A derivational morpheme is an affix that, when added to a stem, creates a new stem, e.g. the {-ize} in “hospitalize,” the {un-} in “unhappy.”
- An inflectional morpheme is an affix that, when added to a word, “grounds” the word in terms of time, space, or the other aspects of the environment, e.g. the {-s} in “desks,” the {-ed} in “walked.” There are exactly four inflectional morphemes that can be added to each English verb, two for each noun and two for each adjective.

Concepts in Morphology

- Derivational categories/affixes
  - Often change word class.
  - Significantly affect the meaning of a stem.
  - Relatively “non-productive” in that . . .
    - they tend to not apply to all roots of a class.
    - they tend to not have the same effect every time they apply.