# 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?

### The Linguistic Approach

What comes to mind when you think of "grammar"?

### The Linguistic Approach

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

## The Linguistic Approach

 Grammar is a bridge between mental states of individuals and the social reality of their community.

## The Linguistic Approach

o Fact or Fiction? Casual everyday speech is grammatically poorer than careful, formal speech.

#### The Linguistic Approach

o 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 ...

#### The Linguistic Approach

- · 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.

#### The Linguistic Approach

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

## The Linguistic Approach

- 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.

## The Linguistic Approach

 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 . . .).

## The Linguistic Approach

 Fact: be omission occurs in certain "nonstandard" 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

#### The Linguistic Approach

• Who is it? standard and non-

standard

\*Who it? non-standard

\*Who's it? standard

I know who you are. standard

I know who you be. non-standard

\*I know who you're. standard

\*I know who you. non-standard

## The Linguistic Approach

- 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.

## The Linguistic Approach

- 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.

## The Linguistic Approach

Pedagogical reasons:

· Scientific reasons:

## The Linguistic Approach

- Methods
  - data collection
  - data analysis
  - hypothesis generation
  - hypothesis testing and revision
  - principled explanation

### The Linguistic Approach

Theory of symbolic systems
 The form-function composite:



### The Linguistic Approach

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



#### The Linguistic Approach

• How does the mind actually work?

## The Linguistic Approach

Characteristics of Heart and Head Knowledge

Heart knowledge

Head knowledge

## The Linguistic Approach

 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.



# Components of Grammar

- Grammar is traditionally divided into two main components:
  - Morphology
  - -Syntax

## Concepts in Morphology

- o A morpheme is an <u>idealized mental construct</u>. It represents the smallest piece of form that expresses meaning in a language, e.g. {cat}, {-s}, {-ed}, {leftward stress shift}.
  - o 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.
  - o A **bound morpheme** is a morpheme that cannot 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."