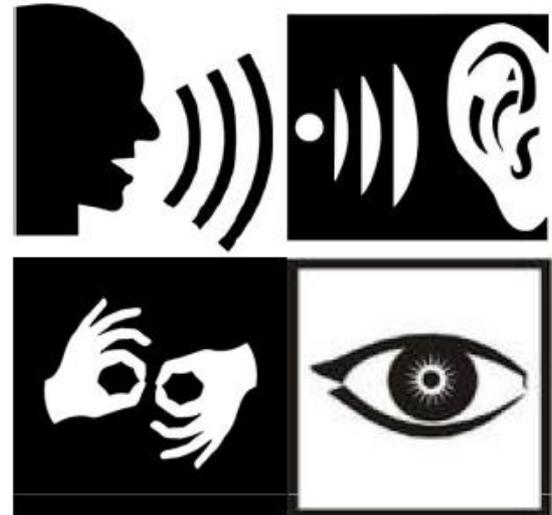


“Language is only the
instrument of science,
and words are but the
signs of ideas.”

-- Samuel Johnson



What is Linguistics?

Overview

- What is Linguistics?
- Linguistic competence vs. performance
- Descriptive vs. Prescriptive rules/grammars

Readings: 1.1-1.3

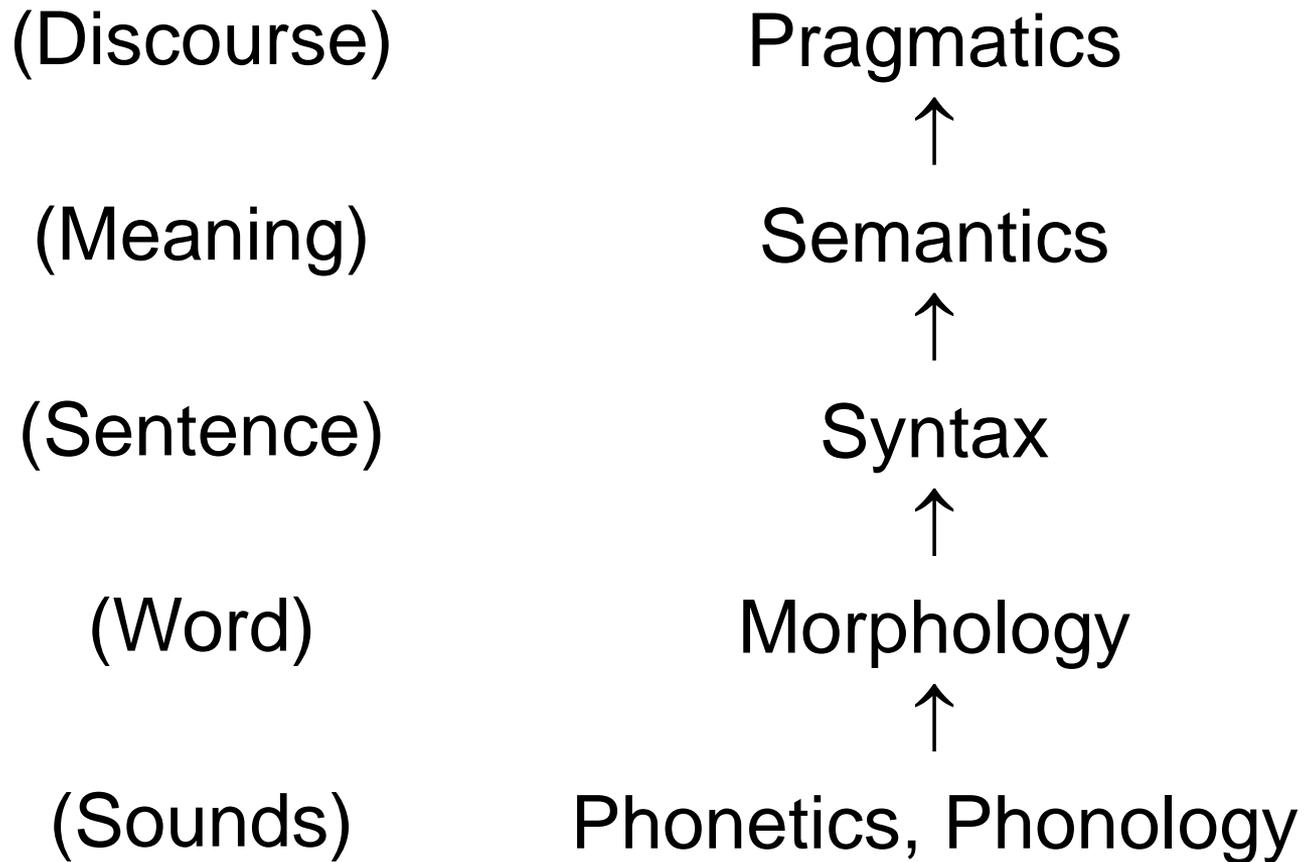


What is Linguistics?

The scientific study and analysis of the structure of human language.



Levels of Linguistic Structure



Phonetics

- The study of the physical properties of speech sounds and how they are made

Park the car in Harvard yard.

[p^haɪk ðə k^haɪ ɪn hɑːvɜːd jɑːd]

[p^ha:k d̩ə k^ha: ɪ̩ hɑ:vɪd^ɾ ja:d^ɾ]



Phonology

- The study of the organization and distribution of speech sounds

blick

vs.

bnick

yulp

kton

froy

lafp



Possible

vs.



Impossible

Blerg!



English words

Morphology

- The study of the formation of words

e.g., which affixes go where, in what order:

quick + -ly = quickly

* fast-ly

run + -er = runner

* er-run

friend + -ly + -er = friendlier

* friend-er-ly

* = ungrammatical
or 'not possible'

Syntax

- The study of the structure of phrases and sentences

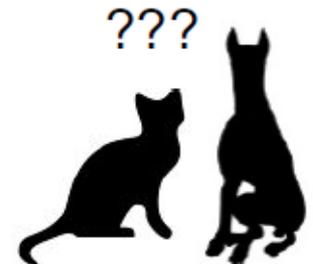
The dog chased
the cat.



The cat chased
the dog.



*The cat dog
the chased.



Syntax

“I once shot an elephant in my pajamas”

Different structure = different meaning:

*I once shot an elephant
(while I was) in my pajamas*

vs.

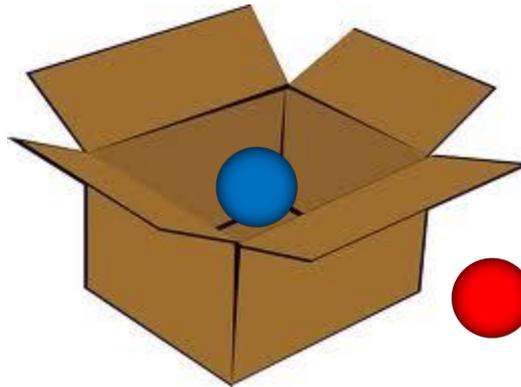
*I once shot
an elephant (who was) in my pajamas*



Semantics

- The study of meanings of words and sentences

Which marble is *near* the box?



Joe kicked the ball. =

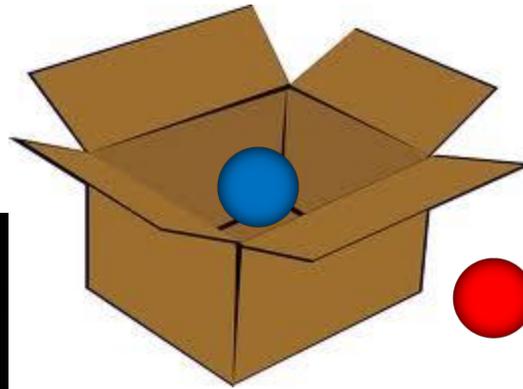
The ball was kicked by Joe.



Different structure,
same meaning

Semantics

Which marble is
near the box?



Pragmatics

- The study of how linguistic meaning depends on context

“Do you have the time?”

= Tell me what time it is

“yeah, right” as agreement

vs. sarcastic disagreement





Linguistics is NOT...

... the study of writing

...the study of how to speak properly

Grammar

□ ***Prescriptive grammar***

- Prescribes rules governing what people *should/shouldn't* say (i.e., what is considered “right/correct/proper” vs. “wrong/incorrect”)

□ ***Descriptive grammar***

- Describes the rules that govern what people actually *do* or *can* say in their language



This is what linguists are concerned with

Prescriptive rules



“Don’t end a sentence with a preposition!”
“Don’t use double negatives!”
“Say ‘to whom’ not ‘to who’.”
“It’s pronounced NOO-klee-yer not NOO-kyuh-ler”

Clip: “The State of American”

<http://www.pbs.org/speak/speech/correct/>

Descriptive rules

□ Phonological:

In English, the sounds [rt] can end a word, but not begin it

e.g., *art*, **rta* ('*' = ungrammatical)

□ Syntactic:

In English, adjectives precede the nouns they modify.

e.g., *That is a big, red balloon.*

**That is a balloon big, red.*

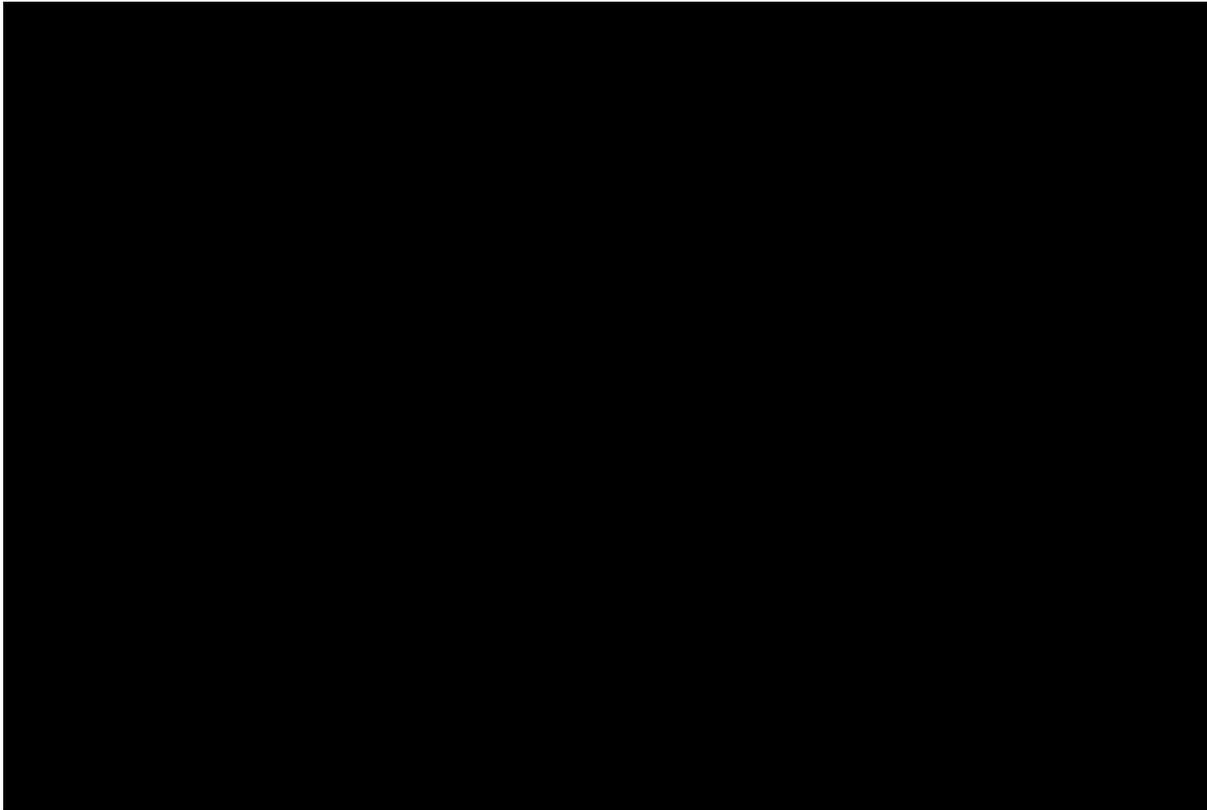


Prescriptive vs. Descriptive

- Prescriptive rules are
 - ... not natural
 - ... must be taught/learned in school
 - ... reflect value judgments
- Descriptive rules are
 - ... natural
 - ... known intuitively (need not be taught)



What kind of rule violation?



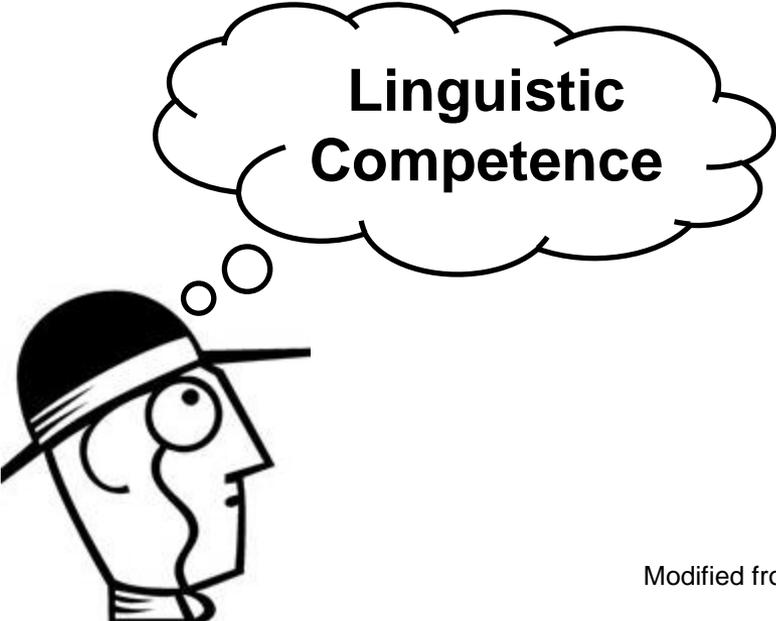


What kind of rule violation?

- What is the problem Marshall and his friend have with the way Kate used “literally”?
 - How do they think “literally” should be used?
 - How does Kate use it?
 - As an intensifier (= “really” or “so much”)

What does it mean to 'know' a language?

- Can be understood by other speakers
- Can recognize possible sentences, words
- What you 'know' about your language =



**Linguistic
Competence**

The (largely hidden, unconscious) knowledge speakers have about their native language(s) (sounds, words, sentences, etc.)

Linguistic competence

(knowledge of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, etc.)



Mental Lexicon

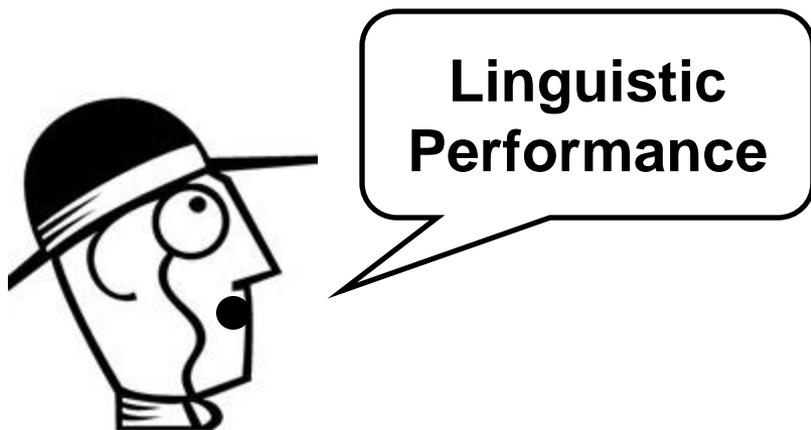
A mental dictionary containing all the information you know about the words of your language

Mental Grammar

Knowledge of the (descriptive) rules that govern the sounds, words, sentences, etc. of your language

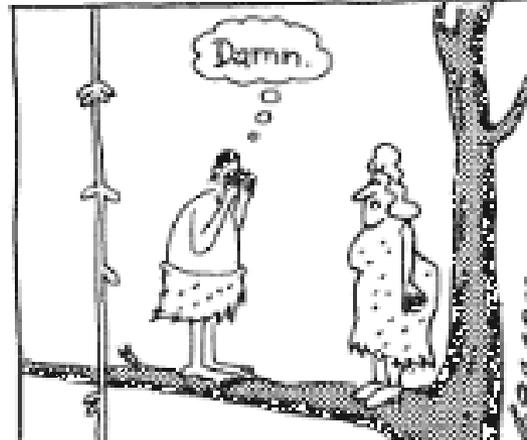
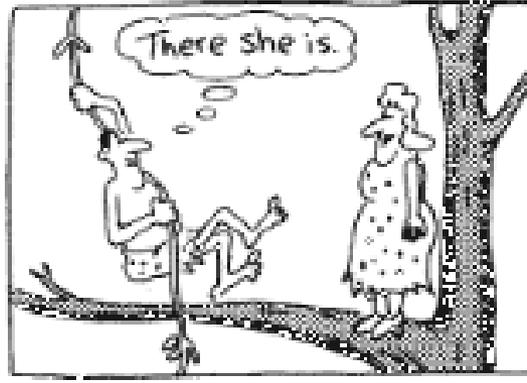
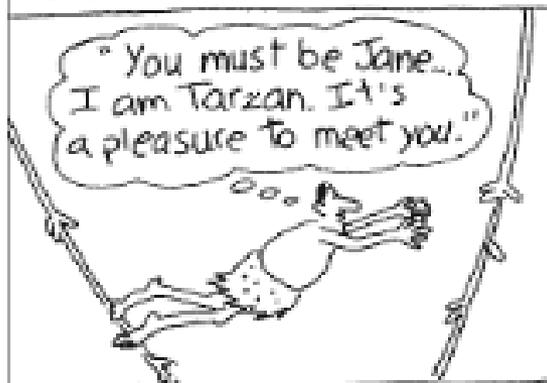
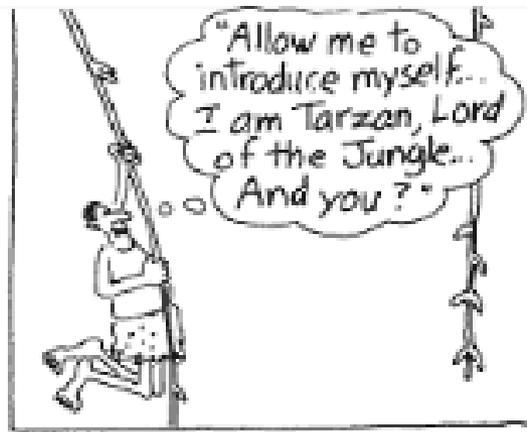
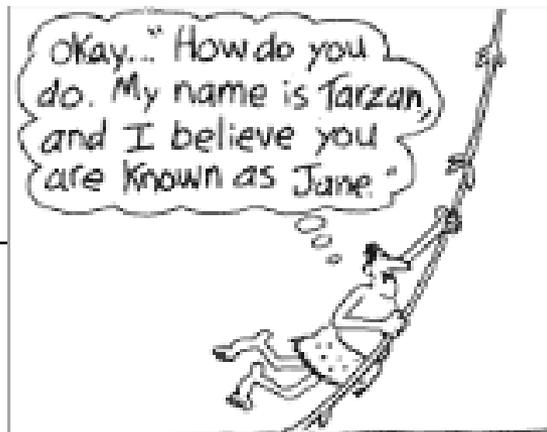
How do linguists study competence?

- Observe **linguistic performance**:



The observable realization of linguistic competence as revealed in speech or language behavior

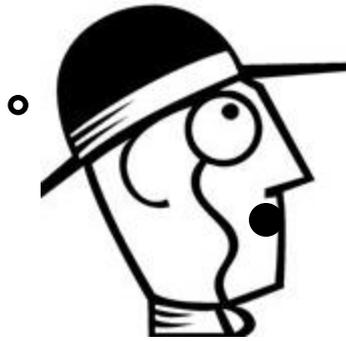
- Make hypotheses and draw conclusions about what our linguistic competence must be like



Competence vs. Performance



Unconscious
knowledge



What you
actually say



Homework

- Enroll in Moodle class webpage
- Read 1.1–1.4 (Intro) & 2.1 (Phonetics)
- Look at / Start ‘HW: Intro material’
 - Due online by 11:30pm TOMORROW
- Do IPA font support “quiz”
 - Charis SIL font needed for Phonetics section