

THE DOMAINS OF LINGUISTICS:

Most recent linguistic theories divided language into three aspects: phonology, grammar, and semantics. The scientific study of language requires describing language phonologically, grammatically, and semantically.

I. PHONOLOGY: It studies the sound system of human language; it includes both phonetics and phonemics.

A. PHONETICS: it is the study of vocal sounds, describing them as they are made. Phonetics as the study of sounds stems from a religious stimulus; the old Indians were the first who thought of a framework which describes correct pronunciation. According to them the written aspect of the language remains unaffected; whereas the spoken one can be subject to mispronunciation, and this would affect the pronunciation of their holy texts. During the 19th century, Melville Bell invented a writing system that he called "Visible Speech", he was a teacher of the deaf, and he intended his writing system to be a teaching and learning tool for helping deaf students learn spoken language. He contributed a lot to the establishment and development of a unified international pronunciation system, known today as the I.P.A (International Phonetic Alphabet) in 1886 in Paris. Phonetics is concerned with the production of sounds with no reference to any language in particular. It includes

1. Articulatory phonetics: it investigates the different organs of speech which are involved in the production of sounds (place of articulation). It also describes how the organs of speech contribute in the production of sounds (manner of articulation).

2. Acoustic phonetics: it studies the medium through which the sound goes from the mouth to the ear.

3. Auditory phonetics: it investigates how sounds are received by the ear and analysed by the brain, it describes the mechanisms involved in transmitting the sound from the outer ear to the appropriate part in the brain to be decoded (to be understood).

4. Forensic phonetics: has applications in legal cases involving speaker identification and the analysis of recorded utterances.

B. PHONEMICS: the study or description of the distinctive sound units (Phonemes) of a language and their relationship to one another.

1. Phoneme: the smallest unit of sound in a language which can distinguish two words.

Eg: pan & ban differ only in their initial sound: a. pan begins with /p/ and ban with /b/ b. ban and bin differ only in their vowels: /æ/ and /i/. Therefore, /p/, /b/, /æ/, and /i/ are phonemes of English. The number of phonemes varies from one language to another. English is often considered to have 44 phonemes: 24 consonants, and 20 vowels.

2. Allophones "other sounds": when a phoneme has two different pronunciations in different phonetic environments, we say it has different allophones, for example: the phoneme /L/ has two different pronunciations in different words; it is sometimes dark like in (milk) [ɫ] and sometimes clear like in (sleep) [l].

3. Phone: the smallest sound as it is produced (individual sounds as they occur in speech). Eg: the different ways of pronouncing the vowel in the word can, Long [æ:], shorter [æ], with nasalization [æ̃], are all phones of the phoneme /æ/.

* When we speak, the vocal tract works without stop giving a stream for a flow of sounds, one sound merges into the other and we get words, phrases, sentences, or language sequences. When we produce these segments, we make use of the wide range of changes (voice high or low, quick or slow) which may change the meaning of what

we say, this is what provides the data of supra-segmental analysis which is derived into four parts:

1. Assimilation: it is the change of a speech sound because of the influence of an other sound following or preceding it; we have three types of assimilation:

a. Progressive assimilation: a sound is pronounced differently because of the influence of the preceding sound, e.g.: dogs, horses.

b. Regressive assimilation: a sound is pronounced differently because of the influence of the following sound, e.g.: the old man.

c. Reciprocal assimilation: two sounds influence each other and result in a new one, eg: this year, could you.

2. Pitch: it is the rapidity of vibration of the vocal cords, which results in different tones of voices, the faster the vocal cords vibrate, the higher the pitch.

3. Juncture: a short pause between words, or between sentences in longer discourses, it is easy to see it in written because it is a space, but in speech it is not easy to make this separation (a nice house/an ice house), (I scream/ice cream).

4. Stress: it is a term used to refer the degree of force used in producing a syllable.

II. GRAMMAR:

ANCIENT BEGINNINGS:

One early example is the grammatical tradition of ancient India, with its most famous figure, Panini (520 BC - 460 BC). The Indian Grammarians were concerned with preserving Sanskrit, the sacred language of Hinduism, in its Classical form, in order to

ensure that it would be used properly in ritual. To do this they described every side of the language in small detail. Panini's Grammar was a huge work detailing the step-by-step derivation of Sanskrit sentences, all the more impressive because it was not written down, but memorized in verse.

DEFINITION:

A sentence may be defined as the target structure unit in terms of which the grammar of the language is organized.

Grammar is the study of words formation and words arrangement in the language, so grammar includes Syntax; that is the different rules which govern the order and arrangement of words in a sentence, and morphology; that is the study of words formation or morphemes formation.

A. SYNTAX: is concerned with the different rules that govern the sentence, it is based on:

The patterns that underline the structure of the sentence and its constituents.

And the syntactic devices which are concerned with the linking of those constituents together. Each sentence is constructed out of a set of constituents which may be reduced to a basic sentence type (S+V+O) or (S+V), to reduce the complex sentence into its basic type we may proceed until the resulting sentence can not be reduced.

E.g.: - Mad dogs savagely bite innocent strangers.

- Dogs bite innocent strangers.
- Dogs bite strangers.
- Dogs bite. (it can't be reduced)

The sentence is the upper unit which expresses the complete meaning through a given way of arranging elements. The same meaning can be expressed by the same elements arranged in different ways, the language user knows the different rules which govern the sentence structure and this knowledge of rules helps him decide whether the sentence is meaningful or not. This knowledge concerns all the information about language structure and language function and this is called **Competence**.

To be competent in language means to possess enough information about the rules of phonology, grammar, and syntax.

Eg: - He eats an apple (correct)

- An apple is eaten by him (correct)
- Is an eaten apple him by (wrong)

It is our competence which makes us understand that sentence 3 is wrong, though it is made of the same elements which make sentence 1 & 2 meaningful. So, sentence 3 is meaningless.

Our competence can be seen as whether or not we are able to judge sentences correctness, or also as the act of producing correct sentences. To produce a correct sentence is to make in practice our theoretical knowledge, so we manifest our competence.

Our competence also makes us interpret that a sentence may have two different meanings.

E.g.: 1. John and Valery are married.

2. They called him Doctor Smith.

In sentence 1: one meaning is that both John and Valery are married to other persons, or another meaning which is John is the husband of Valery or John and Valery are a couple.

In sentence 2: one meaning is that they call him Dr Smith and it is not his name, and the other meaning is that he is ill and they called him a doctor whom name is Smith.

Note: the act of putting competence into practice is called performance. Performance presupposes (needs) competence. We can not perform in a language unless we are competent.

B.MORPHOLOGY: it studies the structure of words or morphemes.

Morpheme: the smallest meaningful unit in a language. There are two types of morphemes:

1. **Free morphemes (base root):** are those words which carry meaning in themselves.

E.g.: open, book, car, ...

2. **Bound morphemes:** are those words which carry no lexical meaning, but only a grammatical function. These words are to be attached to the base to express a meaning.

Bound morphemes are called “affixes” and are divided into three types:

a. **Infixes:** they are bound morphemes inserted inside another word. e.g.: Tagalog (language of the Philippines): -um- shows that a verb is in the past tense: sulat (to write) – sumulat (wrote). In English, the word (absolutely).

b. Prefixes: they are bound morphemes attached to the beginning of the base. E.g.: unemployment.

c. Suffixes: are divided into two categories:

1. derivational suffixes: modify the word lexically according to its dictionary meaning.

E.g.: child (noun) childish (adjective)childishly (adverb)

2. inflectional suffixes: they modify the word grammatically. E.g.: book books, walk walked

Note: * inflectional suffixes are always final and do not allow further affixation.

* the allomorphs are variants of the same inflectional morpheme; just like allophones, which are variants of the same phoneme.

Eg: the plural (s) has got five allomorphs:

-Pronounced /z/ after a voiceness stop (t, p, k) or a voiceless stop (d, g).

-Pronounced /iz/ after a voiced or voiceless sound.

-Irregular form, like: axed, ox

d. The zero-plural (zero morpheme): a morpheme involved in null affixation. E.g.: the plural of fish is fish, which can be analyzed as the noun fish plus the null variant of the plural morpheme.

The division of morphemes into free and bound has the idea of division of language into three parts according to their morphemic similarities:

1. **agglutinative language:** a language in which various affixes may be added to the stem of a word to add to its meaning or to show its grammatical function.

Eg: in Swahili, wametulipa (they have paid us) consists of:

Wa me tu lipa

They + perfective marker + us + pay

(completed action)

2. **analytic language (isolating language):** a language in which word forms do not change, and in which grammatical functions are shown by word order and the use of function words.

Eg: in Chinese, * jǔzi wǒ chī le

Orange I eat function word

Showing completion

“I ate the orange”

* wǒ chī le jǔzi le

I eat function orange function

word word

“ I have eaten an orange”

3. **synthetic language (inflecting language):** a language in which the form of a word changes to show a change in meaning or grammatical function.

Eg: mouse mice

Come came

III. SEMANTICS:

Is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. Meaning is divided into two kinds:

a. Conceptual meaning (denotative): covers those basic, essential components of meaning which are conveyed by the literal use of the word.

eg: the word *needle*, some of the basic components of this word might include: *thin, sharp, steel instrument*. These components would be part of the conceptual meaning of *needle*.

b. Associative meaning (stylistic): it is the meaning of the speaker's intention, this kind of meaning can not be studied in micro-linguistics; because here the linguist has to do with other elements than the language itself.

Eg: you may have associations attached to a word like needle which lead you to think of *painful* whenever you encounter the word

Semantic relationships (lexical relations):

Words exist in language not in isolation, but in relation with each other. Through this relation we may know the meaning of a word, and sometimes a word can be defined through its related word. The types of relationships the words have are:

1. Synonymy: two words are synonyms when they express sameness in meaning; however, total sameness is never conveyed between words, so there are no complete synonyms.

eg: *to listen* expresses to a high extent the same concept idea that *to hear* does.

But *to hear* can't replace *to listen*.

2. Antonymy: certain words express oppositeness in their meanings, these are antonyms.

We have:

a. Non gradable antonyms (complementary pairs) : comparative constructions are not normally used (the expression *deader* or *more dead* sound strange) and the negative of one member does imply the other. For example, *that person is not dead* (does indeed mean that he is alive).

b. Gradable antonyms: such as the pair *big-small*, can be used in comparative constructions like *bigger than*, *smaller than*. Also the negative of one member of the gradable pair does not necessarily imply the other. For example, if you say *that dog is not old* you do not have to mean *that dog is young*.

3. Hyponymy: when the meaning of one form is included in the meaning of another, the relationship is described as hyponymy, and some typical example pairs are: *daffodil-flower*, *dog-animal*, *poodle-dog*, *carrot-vegetable*, *banyan-tree*. The concept of inclusion involved here is the idea that if any object is a *daffodil*, then it is necessarily a *flower*, so the meaning of *flower*, is included in the meaning of *daffodil*. Or *daffodil* is a hyponym of *flower*. The relation here is considered as a kind of hierarchical relationship.

4. Homophony: when two or more different written forms have the same pronunciation, they are described as homophones. For example, *meat-meet*, *did-deed*, *flour-flower*, *right-write*.

5. Homonymy: when the same form (written & spoken) has two or more unrelated meanings. For example, **bank** (of the river) – **bank** (for money) **Bat** (animal) – **bat** (used in sport), **Race** (sport) – **race** (ethnic group) **Pupil** (at school) – **pupil** (in the eye).

6. Polysemy: is one form (written & spoken) having multiple meanings which are related by extension. For example, the word *head* used to refer to the object on top of your body, on top of the company, or on top of a department. The word foot of a person, of bed, of mountain. Or *run*: person does, water does, colours do.

The distinction between homonymy and Polysemy is not always clear in cut; however, one indication of the distinction can be found in the typical dictionary entry for words, homonyms have got separated entries and treated as independent lexical units. Whereas polysemes have one single entry, with a numbered list of meanings.

STRUCTURALISM: (INTRODUCTION)

The most important contribution to the understanding of language as an abstract phenomenon came in 1916 with the publication of *Ferdinand De Saussure* lecture notes. De Saussure gave lectures at the university of Geneva in which he exposed new

theoretical concepts to evaluate the old school (traditional grammar) and developed a new movement of language analysis.

De Saussure did not leave a book behind, his students gathered his observations from the lectures notes they took, and published them as « Cours De Linguistique Générale ». Thirty years after this publication his views were largely explored. De Saussure was the first to distinguish the synchronic study of the language from the diachronic one, and to provide insights into the nature of the language that we use. According to him the essence of the language is not in its external aspects but in its internal system.

He believes that the language study has to concentrate on the abstract linguistic system which he called “*La langue*” rather than the actual speech which he called “*La parole*”.

Saussure's conception of language as an abstract system underlying the various speech forms of its users, was developed by his followers from the Geneva school, the Copenhagen school, the Prague school, and also the London school.