LNGT0101
Introduction to Linguistics

Lingu-ist-ic-s
[lɪn-gʷɪ-stɪks]
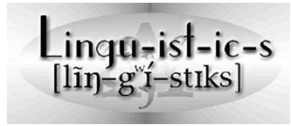
Lecture #13
Oct 24th, 2012

Announcements

- Midterm exam is posted. It is due Wed Oct 31 by 5pm via e-mail or in class if you're submitting a hard copy.
- Please read the instructions carefully before you start working on the exam. Instructions for the exam are different from those for homework assignments.
- I will hold a Q&A session for the midterm on Monday Oct 29th right after class. I'm also available during regular office hours and by appointment for any questions.

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Announcements

- I will post solutions to HW3 later today. I will send a message once they are posted. They should be relevant as you work on the midterm.
- Today, after class, Prof. Shapiro is giving a talk at RAJ, at 4:30.
- Romnesia?

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Today's agenda

- Presentations on the 'linguistics' of the last presidential debate.
- A quick finish of morphological typology.
- Start talking about syntax.

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Morphological typology

- Last time we saw that some languages are **isolating** and others are **synthetic** in their morphological structure.
- We also so that synthetic languages can be **agglutinative** or **fusional**.
- Another aspect of morphological typology has to do with whether languages mark grammatical functions such as 'subject of' and 'object of' on the *head* of the clause or on the *dependents*.

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Head-marking vs. dependent-marking

- Languages that mark grammatical functions on heads are called *head-marking languages*; languages that mark grammatical functions on dependents are called *dependent-marking languages*.

- Let's compare Japanese with Mohawk.

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Head-marking vs. dependent-marking

a. John-**ga** Mary-**o**   butta   Japanese
   John-**SU** Mary-**OB** hit
   "John hit Mary."

b. Sak Uwári **shako**-núhwe's   Mohawk
   Sak Uwari he/her-likes
   "Sak likes Uwari."

c. Sak Uwári **ruwa**-núhwe's   Mohawk
   Sak Uwari she/him-likes
   "Uwari likes Sak."

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Case-marking: Japanese

- Dependent-marking is what is referred to as *case-marking*. Consider, for example, the following sentence from Japanese:

   John-**ga** Mary-**ni**   hon-**o**   yatta
   John-**SU** Mary-**IOB** book-**DOB** gave
   "John gave Mary a book."

- Each noun inflects for *case*: subjects appear with *nominative* case; direct objects appear with *accusative* case; and indirect objects appear with *dative* case.

- SU = subject marker; DOB = direct object marker; IOB = indirect object marker   8

Case-marking: Japanese

- Notice, crucially, however, that in intransitive clauses (those without an object), the case marker on the subject of a Japanese sentence remains the same (i.e., -*ga*):

   John-**ga**   Kobe-ni itta
   John-**NOM** Kobe-to went
   "John went to Kobe."

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Case-marking: Greenlandic

- As it turns out, not all languages behave that way.

- Let's consider the case marking system in transitive and intransitive sentences in Greenlandic Eskimo (CM stands for "case marker").

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Case-marking: Greenlandic

a. Juuna-**p**   atuaga-**q** miiqa-**nut** nassiuppaa
   Juuna-**CM** book-**CM** child-**CM**   send
   "Juuna sent a book to the children."

b. atuaga-**q** tikissimanngilaq
   book-**CM** hasn't come
   "A book hasn't come yet."

- What do we notice here?

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Case-marking: Greenlandic

- The subject of an intransitive clause carries the same case marker as the object of a transitive clause. Such case is typically referred to as "*absolutive*," as opposed to the "*ergative*" case marker on the subject of a transitive verb.

- We call Japanese-type languages "*nominative-accusative*" languages, and Greenlandic-type languages "*ergative-absolutive*" languages.

- There are also languages with a "**split**" system: They behave nominative-accusative in some contexts, but ergative-absolutive in others. You need to bear this in mind in case your LAP language is of that kind.

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Morphology of Some Verbal Categories

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Tense

- Tense can be defined as a relation of event time to speech time.
- The main distinctions are between past and non-past, or future and non-future, though some languages will have finer-grained distinctions within "past" or "future".

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Tense

- English:
    - a. I work$_ø$.   (present)
    - b. I work**ed**.   (past)
    - c. I ***will*** work.   (future)
- Lithuanian:
    - a. dirb-***u***   "I work"
    - b. dirb-***au***   "I worked"
    - c. dirb-***siu***   "I will work"

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Tense

- Chibemba (Bantu) changes the verb to indicate if the event took place before yesterday, yesterday, earlier today, or if it just happened. And it has a similarly fine-grained scale for future as well.

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Chibemba past tense system

a. Remote past (before yesterday):
   Ba-àlí-bomb-ele "they worked"

b. Removed past (yesterday):
   Ba-àlíí-bomba "they worked"

c. Near past (earlier today):
   Ba-àcí-bomba "they worked"

d. Immediate past (just happened):
   Ba-á-bomba "they worked"

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Chibemba future tense system

a. Immediate future (very soon):
   Ba-áláá-bomba "they'll work"

b. Near future (later today):
   Ba-léé-bomba "they'll work"

c. Removed future (tomorrow):
   Ba-kà-bomba "they'll work"

d. Remote future (after tomorrow):
   Ba-ká-bomba "they'll work"

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Aspect

- Aspect has to do with the internal temporal structure of an event, e.g., whether it is temporally bounded or not.

  Perfective aspect: "He wrote three letters."

  Imperfective (or habitual) aspect: "He writes letters."

  Progressive aspect: "He is writing letters."

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Aspect

- Some languages like Egyptian Arabic express aspect by means of verbal affixes:

  Egyptian Arabic: katab   "he wrote"

  bi-yiktib "he is writing"

- Other languages like Finnish use case-marking (accusative vs. partitive) to signal aspect:

  Hän luki kirj**an**$_{ACC}$ "He read the book."

  Hän luki kirja**a**$_{PART}$ "He was reading the book."

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Mood

- Mood is a grammatical category through which speakers of a language can indicate whether they believe that an event or a state actually occurs, does not occur, or has the potential to occur.

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Mood

- *Indicative* mood asserts the truth of a proposition, e.g., "It is raining."
- *Subjunctive* mood typically indicates an attitude of uncertainty on the part of the speaker or a hypothetical situation, e.g., "It is essential that it rain."
- Commands are said to be in the *imperative* mood.

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Modality

- Modality has to do with obligation/desire (deontic), or with degrees of possibility (epistemic) regarding an event.

  John must come tomorrow.

  We really should go now.

  vs.

  John must have left the door open.

  My guess is that it should rain tomorrow.

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Evidentials

- Some languages indicate epistemic modality by means of morphological markers, called *evidentials*, e.g., Tuyuca (Brazil and Colombia):

  a. díga   apé-***wi***

     soccer play-VISUAL

     "He played soccer (I saw him)."

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Evidentials

b. díga apé-**ti**
   soccer play-NON-VISUAL
   "He played soccer (I heard him playing)."

c. díga apé-**yi**
   soccer play-APPARENT
   "He played soccer (I have evidence but I didn't actually witness the game in any way)."

Evidentials

d. díga apé-**yigi**
   soccer play-SECONDHAND
   "He played soccer (Someone told me)."

e. díga apé-**hiyi**
   soccer play-ASSUMED
   "He played soccer (It seems reasonable that he did)."

What's syntax?

SYNTAX
is the study of sentence structure in human language.

Syntax

- There are several aspects of syntactic knowledge that native speakers have about their language.
- Let's look at some examples.

Syntactic knowledge: Grammaticality

- Native speakers know what is grammatical and what is ungrammatical in their language, e.g.,

  The silly man hit the nice woman.

  *Silly hit man the nice the woman.

Syntactic knowledge: Grammaticality

- Remember too from Assignemnt#1 that **grammaticality does not depend on meaning**. A sentence can be grammatical even if it is meaningless, e.g.,

  Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.

- Similarly, we can figure out the meaning of an ungrammatical sentence, e.g.,

  *I will in the office for you wait.

- These two facts seem to suggest that *syntax is an autonomous system*, that is, it has its own rules independent of meaning.

Syntactic knowledge: Ambiguity

- Our syntactic knowledge also enables us to understand cases of **ambiguity**. Remember these sentences?

    Anne hit the man with an umbrella.

    Visiting relatives can be a nuisance.

    We need more honest politicians.

    This is a large man's hat.

Bob, the elf, the table, and the hat

- Let's make that more fun!

    Bob hit the elf on the table with the hat.

Syntactic knowledge: Sentence relatedness

- Our knowledge of the syntax of our language also enables us to know cases of **synonymy** or **near-synonymy** between sentences, as the case is with active and passive senesces:

    John broke the window.

    The window was broken by John.

- The same also applies to pairs of sentences like this one, where again two different structures have the same meaning:

    John gave a book to Mary.

    John gave Mary a book.

Syntactic knowledge: Sentence relatedness

- Another case of sentence relatedness is that between statements and questions:

    They will be in London tomorrow.

    Will they be in London tomorrow?

But, …

- Speakers also know that the following two sentences, despite identicalness in structure on the surface, have completely different interpretations with regard to the role of 'John' in each sentence.

    - *John is eager to please.*

    - *John is easy to please.*

Syntactic knowledge: Recursiveness

- Recall also that our use of language is **creative**, that is, we are able to produce and understand an **infinite** number of sentences, even though our linguistic resources are finite: Wilhelm von Humboldt's famous phrase "***infinite use of finite means***."

- Remember also that a sentence in human language could in principle be **recursively infinite** as in the following example:

    This is the dog that chased the cat that killed the rat that ate the cheese that was on the table that was in the room that …

Cross-linguistic variation
(e.g., in word order)

- And as we have seen with phonology and morphology, languages can also differ dramatically in their syntax.
- **English**:
  The child might think that she will show Mary's picture of John to Chris.
- **Japanese**:
  Taroo-ga Hiro-ga Hanako-ni zibun-no
  Taroo-SU Hiro-SU Hanako-to self-POSS
  syasin-o miseta   to   omette iru
  picture-OB showed   that   thinking be
  "Taro thinks (literally, is thinking) that Hiro showed a picture of himself to Hanako."

Syntax

- For our theory of grammar to be adequate, it has to account for these different aspects of native speakers' subconscious syntactic knowledge.
- In addition, it should also tell us why languages differ in their sentence structures the way they do.
- In the syntax section of this class, we discuss these two issues. We start on Monday.

Next class agenda

- Describing syntactic structure. Constituency and syntactic trees.
- Continue reading Chapter 4, pp. 117-148.

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