Grammar and Our Knowledge of Language

Overview

1. Syntax
2. Morphology
3. Phonetics and Phonology
4. Semantics
5. Ambiguity
6. Descriptive and Prescriptive Rules of Grammar

Overview

1. Syntax
   - Constituents
   - Movement

Overview

3. Phonetics and Phonology
   - Articulatory phonetics
   - Acoustic phonetics
   - Auditory phonetics

Overview

2. Morphology
   - Affixation
   - Inflection and derivation
   - Word formation processes

Overview

4. Semantics
   - Anomaly
   - Contradiction
   - Presupposition
   - Metaphor
Overview

5. Ambiguity
   - Lexical and syntactic ambiguity

What is Syntax?

• The study of the way in which sentences are constructed from smaller units called constituents; how sentences are related to each other.

Constituents

• The presidential candidate thought that the expensive dinners given in Lee’s honor were surprisingly boring.

What is Syntax?

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Constituents

- Geraldine thought that the gifts given by Scott were wonderful.
- The presidential candidate thought that the expensive dinners given in Lee’s honor were surprisingly boring.

Movement

- The expensive dinners given in Lee’s honor were surprisingly boring.

Movement

- Surprisingly the expensive dinners given in Lee’s honor were boring.
Movement

• Were the expensive dinners given in Lee’s honor surprisingly boring?

Movement

• Honor the expensive dinners given in Lee’s were surprisingly boring?

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What is Morphology?

• The study of the construction of words out of morphemes.
  - A morpheme is the smallest linguistic unit that can have meaning or grammatical function.

What is Morphology?

• Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious

Affixation - suffixes

• Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious
• Atrociou
• Pretentious
• Delicious
• Salacious
Affixation - prefixes
- Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious
- Super-size
- Superlative
- Supercede
- Superficial

Inflection and derivation
- Eat, eats, eating, ate
- Sleep, sleeps, sleeping, slept
- Round, rounder, roundest
- Eat, edible, inedible
- Sleep, asleep, sleepy
- Round, around, roundabout

Word-formation processes
- Blending: brunch, smog, flubber
- Clipping: phone, exam, dis
- Compounding: basketball, blacklist
- Coining: Kodak, Pepsi, Yoda
- Forming acronyms: radar, scuba, AIDS, NASA
- Semantic shift: hot, like, kosher

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What is Phonetics?
- Phonetics is the study of speech sounds; how they are produced in the vocal tract (articulatory phonetics), their physical properties (acoustic phonetics), and how they are perceived (auditory phonetics).

What is Phonology?
- Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language; how the particular sounds contrast in each language to form an integrated system for encoding information and how such systems differ from one language to another.
Phonetics

• What sounds have you heard in other languages that are not in English?
• Exactly how do you move your articulators to pronounce the tt in butter?
• What two English sounds are often confused when they are heard on the telephone?

Phonology

• How does the pronunciation of s differ in “he talks” and “she snores”?
• What English sounds never occur at the beginning of words?
• How can you say That looks interesting as
  - A statement?
  - A question?
  - Ironically?

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What is Semantics?

• The study of meaning in language

Semantics

• Anomalous sentences
  - Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.
• Contradictions
  - The fertilizer killed the plant but it didn’t die.
• Presuppositions
  - Would you like another sandwich?
• Metaphor
  - That class was a long haul.

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What is Ambiguity?

• The property of words or sentences of having more than one meaning.
• Words with more than one meaning are said to be *lexically ambiguous* (e.g., bank or crane). Phrases with more than one meaning because of the structure of the phrase are said to be *syntactically ambiguous* (e.g., Flying planes can be dangerous).

Lexical Ambiguity

• The crane fell over.
• That's a good pitch.
• Doctor Testifies In Horse Suit

Syntactic Ambiguity

• Susan wrote a book on a famous antique desk.
  - Susan wrote [a book on a famous antique desk].
  - On a famous antique desk Susan wrote a book.

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What is the Difference between Descriptive and Prescriptive Rules of Grammar?

• Descriptive grammar is the objective description of a speaker's knowledge of a language (competence) based on their use of the language (performance).
• Prescriptive grammar is a set of rules designed to give instructions regarding the "correct" or "proper" way to speak or write.

Descriptive or prescriptive?

• Never end a sentence with a preposition.
• In casual styles of speaking, people frequently end sentences with prepositions, but this is generally avoided in formal styles.
• Between you and me is correct; between you and I is ungrammatical.
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