

GENERAL REVISION: basic concepts

Definitions of language according to linguists:

According to Sapir (1921), language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires through a system of voluntarily produced sounds.

According to Ferdinand de Saussure, Language is an arbitrary system of signs constituted of the signifier and signified. In other words, language is first a system based on no logic or reason, and secondly, the system covers both objects and expressions used for objects.

According to Bloomfield, The totality of the utterances that can be made in a speech community is the language of that speech community.

According to Noam Chomsky, the language is the inherent capability of native speakers to understand and form grammatical sentences. A language is a set of (finite or infinite) sentences, each finite length constructed out of a limited set of elements.

Properties of language

There are basically six properties of language that makes the human language different from the animal language.

1. Displacement
This properties allows us to communicate about those events that are currently absent from the environment e.g. like I did the work yesterday, what is your plan for this vacation or I will get the job in the next month. It allows us to make up story and think about both the past and the future.
2. Productivity
It resembles the infinity of unique words / sentences and the combination of word. It is linked to the fact that the potential number of utterances in human languages are infinite.
3. Arbitrariness
No natural connection exists between a linguistic form and its meaning is. i.e the words or symbols used to make the right perception about the objects are not inherently interconnected to those objects they symbolize.
4. Discreteness
This properly ensures that the sounds used in languages are meaningfully distinct and those sounds are considered our own with our distinct meaning.
5. Duality
we find two kinds of simultaneity of language, one is discrete sounds and another is discrete meanings. For example , We can combine the letters l,a,k and e in two different ways : lake and leak. These two word means two different meanings even though they are comprised of the same four sounds.
6. Cultural Transmission
Language is learnt through culture with other speakers and not from parental genes.

Definition of linguistics

Linguistics is the scientific study of language - how it is put together and how it functions. Linguistics is the study of Sounds, Words, and meaning. There are various branches of linguistics. **Linguists** are people who study linguistics.

Branches of linguistics

Micro-linguistics

Phonetics is the study of the sounds of speech. It includes understanding how sounds are made using the mouth, nose, teeth and tongue, and also understanding how the ear hears those sounds and can tell them apart.

Phonology makes use of the phonetics in order to see how sounds or signs are arranged in a system for each language. It is interested in syllables, phrases, rhythm, tone, and intonation.

Morphology looks at how individual words are formed from smaller chunks of meaningful units called morphemes.

Syntax is the study of how phrases, clauses and sentences are constructed and combined in particular languages. Writing a grammar requires defining the rules that govern the structure of the sentences of the language.

Discourse analysis looks at bigger chunks of language - texts, conversations, stories, speeches, etc. Different types of these use language differently, and there can even be differences in how a language is used based on the genre.

Semantics is the study of meaning. It focuses on the relation between words, phrases and other bits of language and on how these words and phrases connect to the world.

Pragmatics is similar, but it involves the study of how speakers of a language use the language to communicate and accomplish what they want. Pragmatics looks more at the relationship between speaker and listener which allows assumptions to be made about the intended message.

Macro-linguistics

Historical Linguistics is the study of how languages have changed over time.

Sociolinguistics is generally used for the study of the relationship between society and language. Sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics that deals with the effect of society on a language. It has strong connections with anthropology, culture, and sociology.

Psycholinguistics deals with the study of the mental aspects of language and speech. Its domain is concerned with how language is represented and processed in the brain. Psycholinguistics, study of linguistics and psychology, is part of the field of cognitive science.

Neurolinguistics deals with the study how language is represented in the brain, how and where a brain stores knowledge of a language that we speak. It focuses on what happens in our brains as we acquire a language, and what happens as we put this knowledge into practice.

Computational linguistics is branch of linguistics that is concerned with the rule-based modelling of natural language from a computational perspective. It is the branch of linguistics that deals with the techniques of computer science that are applied to the analysis and synthesis of language and speech.

Stylistics is an interdisciplinary field of linguistics that deals with the study and interpretation of style and tones in both written and spoken language.

Geography Linguistic also called dialect geography is study of local or regional variations of a language or dialect studied as a field of knowledge. Language geography is the branch of human geography that studies the geographic distribution of language(s) or its constituent elements.

Cognitive linguistics is an interdisciplinary field of linguistics that deals with the study of language, mind, and sociocultural experience that first emerged in the 1970s. Cognitive linguistics is characterized by a commitment to the inseparability of meaning and form in the study of language.

Reference:

Yule, George 2010. The Study of Language. Fourth edition. Cambridge: University Press

Web links:

- <https://literaryenglish.com/branches-of-linguistics-micro-vs-macro-linguistics/>
- <https://www.literaturemini.com/2021/01/characteristics-of-language%20.html>