

Grammar

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Today's lecture

- 1 Preliminaries
- 2 Linguistic structure
 - Linguistic units

Parts of an utterance

Example utterance

Serbo-Croatian is now known as Serbian, Croatian, or Bosnian, depending on the speaker's ethnic or political affiliation.

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Why does it matter?

- Parts act as a unit.
- Parts **mean** something.
- The meaning of natural language is **compositional**: the meaning of the whole is the sum of the parts.
- We process language chunk by chunk, not holistically.
- How can we be certain about what the units are?

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Test for units: focus

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Focused parts can be fronted

Depending on the speaker's ethnic or political affiliation, Serbo-Croatian is now known as Serbian, Croatian, or Bosnian.

Test for units: Pronominalization

Example utterance

*He knows **that woman who speaks Irish-Gaelic.***

Test for units: Pronominalization

Example utterance

He knows that woman who speaks Irish-Gaelic.

Unit replaced by pronoun

He knows her.

Test for units: Question formation

Example utterance

Italian is spoken by the people of Rome.

Test for units: Question formation

Example utterance

Italian is spoken by the people of Rome.

Question

Who is Italian spoken by?

Test for units: Question formation

Example utterance

*Italian is spoken by **the people of Rome**.*

Question

***Who** is Italian spoken by?*

Example utterance

*French is still spoken **all around Africa**.*

Test for units: Question formation

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*French is still spoken **all around Africa**.*

Question

***Where** is French still spoken.*

Many types of units

Linguistics largely deals with the categorization of the units of language (and the relationships among them). Here are some types of units:

orthographic unit an entity based on the writing system of a language { *a*, *cat*, *can't*, *smoking* }

prosodic unit entity based on the sounds of spoken language { *can't*, *l'argent* }

morphological unit entity relevant for the structure of *wordish* things { *un-*, *-ing*, *cat*, *-s* }

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(combinations of *wordish* things)

semantic unit entity based on meaning
{ *Barrack Obama, linguistics 571, driving while
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Syntactic units: some terminology

Definition

A **syntactic word** is the smallest unit in a syntactic construction.

syntactic word

{*in, the, middle*} in the construction *in the middle*

Definition

A **phrase** is a syntactic unit larger than a word but with similar characteristics and deriving its behavior/type from the main word in the phrase, called the **head**.

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Predication

A clause exhibits predicate-argument structure, cf. *log(45)* or *add(2,5)*

- **predicate**: verb (verb phrase) indicating the main action expressed by the clause.
- **subject**: the first noun phrase usually indicating the do-er of the action or, in a passive, the do-ee.
- **object**: in general one of the noun phrases that follow the verb, indicating that which is affected by the action (can be direct or indirect)