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.
Parts of an utterance

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

What are the “parts” (that are at least as big as a word)?
Preliminaries
Linguistic structure

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- is now known
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- ...
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What’s not a part?
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What’s not a part?

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What’s not a part?

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- or political
- ...
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

Example utterance

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

Focused parts can be fronted

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

He knows that woman who speaks Irish-Gaelic.
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

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Question

*Who is Italian spoken by?*

Example utterance

*French is still spoken all around Africa.*
Test for units: Question formation

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Example utterance

*French is still spoken all around Africa.*

Question

*Where is French still spoken.*
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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More units

**syntactic unit** entity relevant for linguistic constructions
(combinations of wordish things)

**semantic unit** entity based on meaning
\{Barrack Obama, linguistics 571, driving while intoxicated\}

**text unit** entity relevant for macro-structures in language
\{a question-answer pair, an entire conversation, an academic paper\}
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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**.

**phrases**

\{ in the middle, ate the last piece, the broken clock, ... \}
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clauses

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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)