### Grundkurs Sprachwissenschaft für Anglistik/Amerikanistik/Englisch: an introduction to (applying) linguistics

PART I (part II will be available later in the semester)

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## Table of contents

T.	ABLE OF CONTENTS	2
1	LINGUISTICS: WHAT IS IT, WHAT IS IT FOR, WHO IS IT FOR?	
2	LET'S TALK ABOUT TEXT: THE APPROACH TAKEN IN THIS INTRODUCTION	
	<ul> <li>2.1 The 'USUAL' VIEW</li> <li>2.2 The 'TEXT'-BASED VIEW</li> <li>2.2 ORGANISATION OF THE INTRODUCTION</li> <li>READING AND REFERENCES</li></ul>	20 24 28 30
3	PLACES WHERE MEANINGS HIDE: A FIRST LOOK AT TEXTS AND THEIR PROPE 31	RTIES
	<ul> <li>3.1 SOME LEGAL EXAMPLES</li></ul>	33 38 45 51 54 57 60 66
4	MAPS, MODELS AND THEORIES: THE ROLE OF LINGUISTIC THEORY	
	<ul> <li>4.1 THE RISE OF THE 'SCIENTIFIC' VIEW OF LINGUISTICS</li></ul>	
5	FROM EARLY MAPS TO FIRST MODELS	105
	<ul> <li>5.1 FROM WORDS TO WORD-CLASSES: FORM AND FUNCTION</li></ul>	108 113 119
6 A	FIRST PRACTICE AT SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND IMMEDIATE CONSTITUENT	129
_	6.1       BREAKING UP A SENTENCE INTO PARTS: TESTS AND PROBES	
7 T	A LONGER, CONTRASTIVE EXAMPLE OF SENTENCE STRUCTURE ANALYSES: T ELECOM TEXTS	HE 143
	READING AND REFERENCES	161

## 1 Linguistics: what is it, what is it for, who is it for?

WHAT WE ARE DOING THIS CHAPTER.

We start in the traditional fashion by suggesting something of what linguistics is. But we also show how language itself plays a central role in that definition. Definitions of linguistics are, after all, themselves only texts. So we can use definitions of linguistics as examples of what a linguistic view of texts can start doing for us and of the questions that it leads us to ask. Linguistics attempts to let us see more clearly how language works. It is the branch of human study that focuses particularly on the roles and properties of human language. People do linguistics because they are interested in language and because they find that the tools developed within linguistics offer techniques and theories that can deepen their understanding of what language is and how it does what it does whatever that might be. These techniques and theories allow more focused questions to be asked and more specific answers to be formulated.

There are clearly very many questions one can have about language; and, consequently, various frameworks can be applied in order to answer those questions. What differentiates linguistics from other frames for asking questions is, firstly, its focus on language in its own right as the main object of study and, reliance—and, secondly, its indeed, its insistence-on 'systematicity'; linguistics provides well defined methods and tools for both asking and answering the questions that arise. And this requires us to approach language and instances of language use systematically using those tools; this is probably the most important thing to grasp about doing linguistics at all.

One of the many possible questions that can be addressed linguistically is to ask what it is about language itself that allows us, indeed, often forces us, to interpret texts in particular ways rather than others, and to produce texts in particular forms rather than others. This question will be given particular prominence in this introduction. This is to focus on something that most often happens so automatically that is passes without us being aware of anything having happened at all. This is both useful and dangerous—useful because it lets us get the job of communicating and managing social reality done, dangerous because when it breaks down, the reasons for breakdown can be difficult to see, and because its apparent transparency leaves us open to all kinds of subtle and not so subtle manipulation.

This is good for speakers/writers (especially politicians and salespeople!) as effects can be achieved without the hearers/readers necessarily being aware of what has been done to them. It is also, therefore, potentially a problem—in that undesirable effects may follow without either speaker/writer or hearer/reader necessarily being aware of what went wrong. An increasing awareness of the role that language and language use plays in these processes is one reason why 'communication experts', councillors who try and smooth interaction by drawing closer attention to just what was said or done linguistically, now form a growing profession. Attention to linguistic detail can reveal

Linguistics: being systematic

how unfortunate linguistic choices can derail otherwise potentially successful interactions.

A basic property of linguistics then is that it is always attempting to make the language that is being studied *visible*—we are not looking 'through' language to see what is being said, what opinions are being made, what cultural values are being transmitted, we are instead looking *at* the language that somehow does all these things. Being able to see *how* language does its many jobs is the primary task that linguistics takes on—providing reliable tools and methods to make the invisible, or easily overlooked, visible.

In this sense, linguistics is like most other sciences nowadays in that we need special tools in order to examine what is being studied. Just as bacteria and microbes are too small to see without a microscope, and many celestial bodies are too far away to see without a telescope, so are the important details of language and language use not directly accessible to observation: much of what language does is 'transparent' in that we, as language users, do not see how language is doing the work it does for us. Nevertheless, and just as is the case with bacteria and microbes, the consequences are very real and understanding the basic mechanisms involved can put us in a far better position to deal with those consequences.

The tools that linguistics provides require practice to be used. It is difficult for us to deliberately 'switch off' our normal automatic schemes of interpretations and to look at, not what we thought was there, but at what was 'really' there, linguistically considered. Viewed from some of the 'postmodern' perspectives currently applied to text interpretation, the notion of something being 'really there' might be considered problematic: we see many discussion of the 'openness' of texts and the freedom of their interpretation—it then becomes up to the reader to construct significant portions of the 'meaning' of a text. This is in many respects a powerful and useful liberation—but one thta must also be tempered when dealing with something as inherently slippery as language and text. The essential distinction as far as linguistics is concerned is the following: we *can* interpret any bit of language almost anyway we wish, but are we *entitled* to? In particular, does the *text itself* support a particular line of interpretation or not.

By using the systematic tools of linguistics, then, we are trying to reduce the unbounded 'possible' interpretations of what is going on in texts, and to look more at what consequences a text has and which interpretations a text actively supports by virtue of the linguistic choices present in the text.



Given any 'bit' of language, we can naturally ask many different kinds of questions of it. We can ask about its literary style, use it for evidence of social relations, probe it for clues about how the mind works. how people communicate. or for evidence concerning the kinds of linguistic organisation that human languages employ to get their work done. Whichever we do. we are

taking some particular bit of language (the 'token') and imbuing this with some additional meaning (the 'value').

When we do linguistics, that is, when we ask questions about language using the tools and methods of linguistics, we are always required to keep the *actual language that occurs* firmly in the centre of attention: if we have achieved some purpose through language then it is some properties of the language used that are responsible for this; we then try through linguistics to uncover precisely what those properties were so we can go on to ask further questions-such as, will the same properties always work, i.e., always successfully have the same results when used, or do they depend on other conditions, the social context, who is speaking, what is being spoken about, the particular placement of the language material at this point rather than that, etc.? When we loose sight of what the actual bit of language was that we are examining, then we are unlikely to find out much about how that bit of language did what it did: we will be interpreting, quite literally, an invention—something that may bear little relation to the original piece of language that gave rise to the behaviour or results we thought to investigate.

An important preliminary question for any further questions about language is then the following: what 'bits' of language have what effects? And how can we find out? —Just where does some particular property of a literary style live inside the language we are examining, just where is there something that provides evidence for how the mind works, or how people communicate? Unless we can focus in on the bits of language that are relevant for our questions, those questions will remain unanswered and trapped within the bounds of hypothesis, speculation, opinion and plain guessing. Providing such ways of focusing, of being able to ask tighter questions, is the main purpose of the tools and methods of linguistics. An appropriate and successful tool is something that we know how and when to use: if we try and bang in a nail using a screwdriver, or a microscope, then we have probably not quite understood something about the appropriate tool for the job. But when we know how and what tool to use, then this is, in many respects, one of those 'transferable skills' that we like to encourage. Given an appropriate hammer, we can approach any appropriate nail, and get the nail banged in: it does not matter which particular nail is involved. Linguistic tools are similar: once we know how they operate and what they operate on, we can apply them to any appropriate 'bit' of language: we do not need to develop new tools, new interpretations, for every new piece of language we encounter. Indeed, if we did, then it would no longer be possible to keep hold of 'systematicity'. It is precisely because we can do the 'same things' to many different bits of language that we can make generalisations, and see real differences when they occur much more readily.

Linguistics has become increasingly 'systematic' over the past 150 years or so. While, on the one hand, this requires more effort on our part to learn to use the tools that it offers effectively, on the other hand, this is responsible for the fact that we now know very much more about what language is and how it works than previously. Even over the last 40 years, linguistics has been transformed almost beyond recognition to what it was before. This makes it an extremely exciting area of investigation: combined with some solid results there are, equally, new and uncharted waters and continents to be explored. It is exactly because of the increased accuracy of the tools and methods now developed-very much analogously to being able to build more powerful telescopes than before—that these new areas have been made visible. And even relatively traditional areas, the workings of everyday language that we encounter all the time, the role of differing kinds of linguistic phenomena in making literature work, the role of others in hindering or helping language learning and teaching—all of these now benefit from the new tool sets that linguistics is constructing.

Applying a linguistic tool: sentence structure

So what does a linguistic tool look like? We can begin to suggest something of what this means by considering some definitions of 'linguistics'. What we will do is the following: first, *we will consider the definitions very literally*, looking closely at what the, usually ignored, grammatical forms tell us and, second, we will then interpret the 'hidden meaning' of these apparently quite innocuous and straightforward forms. Looking at the texts very literally is the first step towards focusing on *the texts themselves* rather than on our implicit and apparently automatic understanding of those texts—that is, on what the texts actually are saying rather than what we think they might be saying.

Here then are four definitions, the first from a dictionary, the rest from some standard introductions to linguistics (all references in this introduction are given in references sections at the end of each chapter):

• "1. Linguistics is the study of the way in which language works."

(Collins COBUILD English dictionary. HarperCOLLINS, 1995)

- "Linguistics can be defined as the scientific inquiry into human language—into its structures and uses and the relationship between them, as well as into the development and acquisition of language." (Finegan, 1989, *Language: its structure and use.* p13)
- "Linguistics is the name given to the discipline which studies human language." (Widdowson, *Linguistics*. 1996:3)
- "Linguistics tries to answer the basic questions 'What is language?' and 'How does language work?'. It probes into various aspects of these problems, such as 'What do all languages have in common?', 'What range of variation is found among languages?', 'How does human language differ from animal communication?', 'How does a child learn to speak?', 'How does one write down and analyse an unwritten language?', 'Why do languages change?', 'To what extent are social class differences reflected in language?' and so on." (Aitchison, 1992, *Teach Yourself Linguistics*. p3/4)

Now, if you were asked what we have just learned, you would probably most naturally give back some of the information that these definitions contain. They have told us something about what linguistics is. But understanding what these text fragments said does not require anything particularly linguistic. Indeed, just as mentioned above, probably the language used in these definitions became transparent to you as they were reading them (unless there was a problem of comprehension). When reading normally the precise linguistic details of the texts being read is not in focus. So let us now go back and approach these text fragments as bits of language to be taken apart linguistically—as 'linguistic data' that are going to be subjected to the tools of linguistic analysis.

As we have heard, the heart of linguistics is being systematic, and listening to what language actually does, rather than what we might think it is doing. Thus, what do the above texts tell us *linguistically* that

linguistics is? To begin answering such questions linguistically, we turn to our literal interpretations. Precisely because language operates transparently, it typically deposits us on a chute like a playground slide that quickly leaves us at the bottom without having taken in much of the journey. We need to break into this automatic process to make visible just what language features constructed the particular slide we were placed on. As we will see here, and in more detail in the many examples below, this is often a useful and necessary thing to do because, as readers/writers, we are generally *unaware* of the meanings that have been made for us.

So, returning to the above definitions of linguistics, when we pay close attention to the *language* used in them, rather than letting the language be transparent and 'unproblematic', the definitions tell us, for example, that:

- linguistics is a study
- linguistics is a scientific inquiry
- linguistics is a name
- linguistics is a discipline

We see this by going to the text fragments and picking out the exact grammatical contexts in which the term 'linguistics' was used.

In this collection, then, linguistics is some kind of 'object'—a study, discipline, inquiry, or a name. These are abstract objects. But we still know that they are objects because, linguistically—and, in particular, grammatically—we can count them ('three studies', 'four disciplines'), we can give them various attributes ('an important study', 'a scientific discipline'), and we can use them in the kinds of sentences shown here: i.e., "linguistics is an X". *Grammatically*, this is no different to other kinds of objects, such as tennis balls, pens, and poems. Thus we also find sentences such as "Everest is a mountain", "Marlowe was a playwright". Despite any differences that we think might be important, grammatically the texts are grouping these diverse entities together in some sense.

So, if we take the language that is used here literally (and this is part of being systematic in our use of our tools—not changing the tool just because we have a different nail), then in *some* sense (precisely which sense we will return to below) the language used is placing linguistics and other objects together.

We can then recognise that when a writer writes:

linguistics is the study of something

then that writer has *chosen* to use a form of language that is very similar to a statement such as:

a microscope is a tool for examining...

that is, we have defined one object (linguistics, microscope) in terms of some other object or class of objects (a study, a tool). When we look at any particular text, because that text has taken us on its very particular slide and deposited us at the bottom, then it can often seem that there was no other way: while on the slide we do not make many choices. But when we compare the particular path taken by one text to those taken in other texts, we can begin to see that the notion of 'choice' is in fact crucial: texts are constructed in order to create particular views of the world, particular relationships between speakers and hearers, and this is inherent in there particular grammatical choices.

Even in our linguistic definition examples we can see this at work. The definitions in fact give us another view on linguistics, too; for example:

- linguistics tries to answer questions
- linguistics probes into questions

In these sentences linguistics is not just some kind of object being related to others, it is now some kind of 'doer'—both an answerer of, and a prober into, questions. This is then, by the same kind of reasoning as above, to place linguistics *grammatically* in the same kind of category as a human being, or an inquisitive animal; typically, the entities that can probe or answer questions are people or conscious beings of some kind, as in:

the *critic* tries to answer questions about what makes a work good a newspaper *reporter* probes into the details of the crime

Thus the language used in these definitions has described linguistics in two ways: first, as some kind of 'object', second as some kind of 'doer'. The latter suggests an additional meaning being made in the text fragments of 'linguistics is something that asks questions'.

This is what the *form* of the definitions tells us. Being systematic about language structures and their uses means that we do not ignore the fact that language is apparently using the same forms to talk about what must, surely, be very different kinds of things ('linguistics', 'animals', 'mountains'). But if we ignored this, we would be throwing away our telescope before looking through it. Instead, we look through and see what we can see: in the present case, we see that language is doing something similar in rather different situations—it is grouping together dramatically different entities ('linguistics', 'animals', 'mountains') and presenting them to the reader in exactly the same way. This brings us to

the central linguistic question—a question especially important given our focus on text interpretation—and that is to ask *why*.

This question is often left unaddressed precisely because language functions so well, because it disappears behinds the scenes and performs its magic without us being aware of it. The literal interpretations can seem so 'natural' that they remain unquestioned, but they should not.

So, we have now applied a very simple linguistic tool—looking at the precise grammatical form of the statements made and saying how these are similar to, or different from, the grammatical forms used in some other contexts: so what? The fact that this took us a page or two to set out is an indication that our tool was not vet very good: it took us a lot of text to get to a very simple

not yet very good: it took us a lot of text to get to a very simple result because we have not yet seen the real tools for doing this particular job—the tools of grammatical analysis. When we have these, the discussion goes much further much quicker, but for now—i.e., until we have introduced the appropriate tools in the chapters below—we have to make do. Does the result of this analysis of the uses of 'linguistics' tell us anything?

Note first that we have been forced to the statements above because we are being systematic: we cannot look at a text fragment about linguistics and a text about mountains or screwdrivers and ignore as it suits us the fact that similar or different grammatical forms are being used. If we were not being systematic, this would be an option for us; we could ignore—or, more likely, not even see—that there are some similarities involved. But when we apply our tool, in this case looking very simply at the grammatical forms being used, we do it for *all* of our data. This very literal level of interpretation then turns out to be significant because it is in fact an *additional* part of the meaning of the sentences and the texts in which they occur—a level of meaning that we normally just jump over when reading. We think we know what the writers wanted to say, so we do not dwell on the forms used.

But actually it is not true that we 'know' what the writers or speakers meant somehow independently of the form of language used—we are not mind-readers. The form of the language employed additionally *commits* the writer to the statements shown in the literal interpretation—regardless of whether or not the writers or speakers themselves wanted to make those meanings; the writer's intention is here actually more or less irrelevant. When the grammatical forms used are the same, an important part of the meaning is the same too (just which parts we will talk about later when we discuss more about meaning and semantics). This matters because these particular extra

Applying a linguistic tool: reading the results meanings, whether chosen consciously or not, also commit the writer to further particular viewpoints which readers/hearers respond to, often without being aware of it. And these extra meanings build up complex interrelationships within texts; these interrelationships are, in good, natural texts, highly *cohesive*—they build up a text as a coherent single unit—whereas in poorer texts, they may be dissonant and create problems of interpretation and viewpoint. Something which readers/hearers might misinterpret as 'bad style' or 'clumsy phrasing' without being quite sure why.

This becomes even clearer when we contrast texts that take different views; when any individual text is working well, its additional meanings appear 'natural' and 'unproblematic'. Only when we are confronted with contrasting views, each presenting itself as 'unproblematic', are we forced to deal with the fact that maybe those views presented are not quite so 'unproblematic' as thought.

Let's compare then the linguistics definitions above with the following definition:

• "Linguistics constitutes the field of the linguist. He seeks a scientific understanding..." (Robins, 1997, A short history of linguistics)

Here is a very different kind of grammatical construction concerning different kinds of objects. In this case, linguistics is being described as: 'the field of the linguist'; and for the first time we have a definition of linguistics in relation to a human being, the 'linguist'—i.e., 'linguistics' is what linguists do. The definition then goes on *not* to describe the abstract object 'linguistics' (e.g., what parts it has, how it relates to other abstract objects, etc.) but to talk about what linguists do, 'he seeks a scientific understanding...'. This is not a random choice, a matter of an individual stylistic selection that this author happens to pick, fortuitously arriving at a different phrasing at this point in his discussion than did the other authors above. It is instead part of the more abstract and overall meaning that Robins' text-as-a-whole is concerned with constructing. We see this clearly in this further extract from Robins' introduction:

"In certain cultures ... curiosity and awareness of one's environment have been able to grow into a science, the systematic study of a given subject or range of phenomena, deliberately fostered and transmitted from one generation to another... Among the sciences that arise in this fashion, folk linguistics has developed in different parts of the civilised world into linguistic science. The term *science* in the collocation *linguistic science* is used here deliberately, but not restrictively. Science in this context is not to be distinguished

# 'Style' is functional

from the humanities, and the virtues of exactness and of intellectual self-discipline on the one hand, and of sensitivity and imagination on the other, are all called into operation in any satisfactory study of language." (Robins, 1997, p1/2).

It is precisely Robins' focus here to describe linguistics as something that arose within the history of humans' investigation into their world and environment, both physical and social. In short, the definition of Robins fits into a text that creates meanings that make visible the *human* doer, the scientist, the researcher, the one who asks questions.

This is in stark contrast to the definitions above, which were used in texts that instead make meanings that chose to *hide* that human doer—creating a world of abstract investigation and objectivity without human intervention. Robins' definition makes immediate contact with individuals who define and create the activity, the former definitions establish a distance, a boundary between 'linguistic science and how it is' and those who carry out the science.

The first set of definitions can therefore be shown, linguistically, to be part of an overall discourse, or story, or 'narrative', which constructs linguistics as something similar to other sciences, particularly, the natural sciences—which, not incidentally, has been a reoccurring aim of some linguists for well over a century! Swapping the forms of the definitions used between Robins' introduction and the others would weaken both: Robins orientation towards linguistics as a human endeavour would be watered down, just as the other definitions' attempts to define an autonomous branch of science would. The linguistic forms selected, and the very literal meanings made with them, are therefore shown to be significant and important for how the respective writers were constructing their respective texts, and through those texts, their respective 'worlds'.

This is more than a matter of individual or stylistic interpretation: the linguistic forms used are readily recognisable—any analyst could repeat the same 'experiment'. It is therefore a linguistic fact that the writers are constructing their texts in this way *regardless* of whether they themselves were aware of it, or intended this effect. In short, and as we shall see in more detail later on, particular choices of grammatical forms are here placing some meanings out in the open, in the foreground, making them visible, while others are placed well in the background. The grammatical forms selected commit the writer to these perspectives: just what the perspectives are, however, can only be revealed by further systematic study, employing these and many more tools of linguistics.

In short, this close correlation between very local and small-scale decisions of 'wording' and 'grammatical phrasing' and the larger-scale perspectives and implications of language use and entire texts is a pervasive property of language in action. And it is an aspect of language use that it is difficult to address without linguistics and its systematicity. This is, in fact, one of the main reasons why we need to employ linguistic methods—to make clear these correlations and to follow meanings wherever they are being made.

This demonstrates that the additional meanings that come from the close literal interpretation of the linguistic forms adopted in a text contribute significantly to how a text is constructed and interpreted. The additional meanings add in a further layer of complexity on top of our superficial reading of a text. These meanings bring out particular similarities and connections-for example, linguistics being an autonomous object-while at the same time placing other potential connections in the background—for example, linguistics being a human activity. Language therefore, whenever it is used, both hides things and makes things visible. And so, since, in a very important sense, language in use *makes* the meanings that are expressed, and furthermore, since it is people (generally) who use language, it is they who ultimately have responsibility for the meanings that their language makes. This is true regardless of whether the speaker/writer also had these meanings in mind or not.

All texts make these kinds of commitments: the closer these commitments are to the 'world-view' or ideology of the community of speakers and hearers, the more transparent (i.e., invisible) they are: but they are there nonetheless. Consider Robin's text again. At the time when it was first was written (the first edition of the book appeared in 1967), for example, the use of the general pronoun 'he' for the generic 'linguist' was still considered by many in more 'serious' writing to be unproblematic: now, of course, many more people read this kind of language use as an implicit commitment to the assumption that, generally speaking, the linguists in the scientific community doing scientific work are male and so would consider other choices if they wanted to show themselves as not sharing that commitment. This is an important indication that systems of interpretation change over timethey are not fixed or given, but instead or as much a part of the changing linguistic system as any other; we shall see considerably more of this aspect of language below.

In this case, the 'bit of language' that carries this latter additional meaning—the pronoun choice 'he'—is a relatively simple bit to observe; the slightly more abstract grammatical patterns we picked out above are less easy to come across without some reason for picking

them out, which is why we will discuss some of the tools for recognising them in much more detail below. But some of the most interesting meanings of texts come from rather more complex patterns, and it is here that linguistics comes in with greater force. Linguistics, in its systematicity, provides a toolkit for following these meanings and making them visible, uncovering them, *wherever and whenever* they are being hidden. It is not only in grammatical patterns that such meanings are being made: choices of pronunciation, sounds, patterns of meaning, ways of constructing texts, and many more all contribute. And they can do this in all kinds of texts: ranging from works of literature to bus tickets.

We can take this further in various directions. The particular 'linguistic' tool we have used in this chapter was very blunt: it could not tell us

 very much about the different grammatical forms used, and so we cannot expect more precise answers. Our results resemble the vague blobs seen by Galileo and his contemporaries when looking at Saturn and its rings through the first telescopes: this was more than could be seen before, and certainly raised many questions crucial to subsequent development, but the observations themselves were quite limited until the tools had been improved. In subsequent chapters, as we introduce more material, we will see more of the

current set of tools that linguistics provides for more detailed questions. This would be looking in more 'depth'. We can also look more 'broadly': that is, we can explore other texts, related or not, to see how the kinds of extra meanings that we have now seen are serving to create texts.

But even our blunt tools tell us more than none. For example, several, more recent introductions to linguistics take the step of barely defining linguistics at all before starting on their introduction. They either take it for granted—as something like the science of language—or let it slip by quickly, as in the following introductory paragraph:

• "Language is many things—a system of communication, a medium for thought, a vehicle for literary expression, a social institution, a matter for political controversy, a catalyst for nation building. All human beings normally speak at least one language and it is hard to imagine much significant social, intellectual, or artistic creativity taking place in its absence. Each of us, then, has a stake in understanding something about the nature and use of language. This book provides a basic introduction to linguistics, the discipline that studies these matters." (O'Grady, Dobrovolsky and Katamba, 1996 <sup>[3rd. edition]</sup>, *Contemporary Linguistics: An introduction*, p1) Here we combine some of the aspects of the above paragraphs. Linguistics remains a 'discipline', but we have more of a sense of motivation for the reader/student—language is something that everyone "has a stake in". The main thrust of the introduction is moved away from linguistics and towards the presumed subject matter of linguistics, i.e., 'language'. This allows a swift rhetorical shift to dealing with those properties and structures of language, and how they are to be studied the presumed content of linguistics.

While, on the one hand, this prepares the ground for talking about and doing linguistics, it also, on the other hand, hides some of the choices that are involved in choosing a particular view of language—any view of language taken is already committing itself in terms of a linguistic theory: and if that is not explicit, then it remains hidden; theoretical choice is thus presented as natural truth. A situation where we must always be on our guard. The reader can thus be led in various directions: by concentrating on certain of the 'design features' of communication systems, human language can be made to look more or less like animal communication in general (e.g., like bee dances, or chimpanzee communication, but more so); similarly, by focusing on certain very abstract properties of the 'sign' defined in the field of semiotics, human language can be considered as just another sign system (e.g., like traffic lights, but more so); and so on. Particular theoretical orientations can lead in directions without any indication that a choice of direction has been made. And asking particular questions rather than others, already prefigures certain answers being obtained rather than others. This is another line that will be taken in this introduction: toolkits should not be used blindly; particular tools may be more or less appropriate for different tasks and we need to be sensitised to the choices available and the consequences of those choices for the results we can obtain.

In order to make this clear, we will now adopt a rather different initial definition of linguistics to those offered above—we will define linguistics not as a *noun*, but more as a particular kind of *clause* (which we will introduce and define below); i.e., not as an 'abstract object' but as something happening. 'Linguistics' as a label for a discipline is not so important as 'doing things linguistically'. And doing things linguistically means

#### being purposefully systematic in your dealings with language.

This can be filled out in all sorts of ways, with all sorts of theories there have been and continue to be very many diverse linguistic theories, several of which we shall see below; but the first crucial step is thinking about language systematically for the purposes of revealing more about language and language use. Approaching language in this way *is* doing linguistics: the rest can follow in due time.

This approach itself leaves several open questions of course, which we will take up in more detail. In particular,

- How can you be 'systematic' in dealing with language?
- How systematic is it possible to be?
- How systematic do you need to be?

Answering these questions, as we shall see, already provides much of the subject matter of linguistics.

### Further reading and references

The introductions to linguistics referred to in this chapter were:

- Aitchison, J. (1992). *Teach yourself Linguistics*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Finegan, E. (1989). *Language: its structure and use*. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace and Company.
- Robins, R. H. (1997). A short history of linguistics. London: Longman A ASL 027 f/26(4)
- Widdowson, H. G. (1996). Linguistics. Oxford : Oxford University Press. A ASL 025 f/381

### More difficult:

A detailed example of applying linguistic analysis methods to the definition of linguistics is given in Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1993) *Language as Ideology*. 2nd. Edition. Routledge. Chapter 2: "Transformations and Truth", pp15—37. This is carried out with particular reference to the definitions employed by Noam Chomsky in his view of transformational grammar, which we will hear more of later in the course.

A further linguistic analysis of the rhetoric of Chomsky is given by Hoey, M. (2000) Persuasive rhetoric in linguistics: a stylistic study of some features of the language of Noam Chomsky. In: Hunston, S. and Thompson, G., (eds.) *Evaluation in Text: authorial stance and the construction of discourse*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

# 2 Let's talk about text: the approach taken in this introduction

#### WHAT WE ARE DOING THIS CHAPTER.

Linguistics is a very broad area of study. For any text that takes on the task of introducing you to this area, therefore, there are many possible ways 'in'. So it is worthwhile being as explicit as possible about what we are doing and how we are doing it. This will not only allow us to follow the thread of the present text more easily, but also allows us, very importantly, to contrast and compare the things we address here with those perspectives that you will encounter in other readings in, the area. Any text-including this one-is and approaches to, constructed in a context, with a particular web of background assumptions. With *introductions*, then, one should be particularly cautious. Many introductions introduce linguistics from a particular perspective without telling their readers that this is what they are doing. This means that you are given their view as 'natural' and 'unproblematic'.

An important goal of this entire introduction is to foster a more questioning, an explicitly critical response to the field—and the basic 'taken for granted facts' of the field are not excluded from this. It is crucial that we always ask *why* we are addressing some issue in some particular terms and not in others. This chapter therefore sets out the particular path that we are going to be following, and why.

### 2.1 The 'usual' view

The diagram below is one of the most 'usual' views of the field of linguistics that one finds. It is taken from Aitchison's *Teach yourself* 

linguistics but you will find it repeated, either explicitly or implicitly in the table of contents and organization, in the majority of introductions to linguistics that you will find on the library bookshelf. It represents linguistics as a series of embedded circles, one within the other.

As is fitting for a linguistics at the outset of the 21st century, we will never here consider language in isolation



from those other 'carriers of meaning' with which language typically occurs—here, concretely, the actual diagram that is being used. A meaning is carried by the fact that we are presented with linguistics in this diagrammatic form and not in some other, and in the particular positioning of the labels within that diagram.

At the centre of the diagram, then, are the what are generally called, and are here represented as, the 'core' linguistic areas: phonetics and **phonology**. As one should probably expect, these concern themselves with the sounds of language, their classification and use, their production and reception, their grouping together in particular ways rather than others, and their particular role in building individual linguistic forms that carry meaning. Then we move out through areas that concern themselves with the combination of those forms into grammatical constructions and sentences (syntax), through their meanings (semantics), through to the use that is made of sentences in particular contexts (**pragmatics**). Naturally, when we consider the *use* of combinations of linguistic forms, then there are many other kinds of questions that can be asked other than the 'purely' linguistic (whatever that might mean). These 'other questions' are then the domain of other disciplines: depending on the questions we ask about language, we might need to consider sociology, or psychology, or other areas. This gives rise to what in German is sometimes called 'Bindestrich'

linguistics: the combination of linguistics with some other discipline: e.g., socio-linguistics, psycho-linguistics, and so on.

It can also make contact with disciplines which at first glance are quite separate from linguistics, although the boundaries are in fact very flexible. Thus literature may be studied (perhaps) without an awareness of just how language is working linguistically at all; those who consider some of the language patterns involved in creating literary effects may focus on 'stylistics', which is still sometimes carried out with surprisingly little contact with the results and methods of linguistics; and then again, there are brands of stylistics which pay very close attention to the methods and tools of linguistics—in these cases we see a direct connection between linguistic methods of various kinds and literary criticism and interpretation (cf., e.g., Halliday, 1977; Toolan, 1998; Stubbs, 1996).

This view of the particular areas of linguistics as presented in the diagram, with phonetics and phonology very much at the centre and other disciplines arrayed on the fringe, is firmly grounded historically.

"[Phonetics is] the indispensable foundation of all study of language whether that study be purely theoretical, or practical as well..." Henry Sweet (1877: v) *A handbook of phonetics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. During the eighteenth century, which, as we shall also see below, can in many respects be regarded as linguistics' 'formative years', linguistics began to pay increasingly close and accurate attention to how the sounds of differing languages can be described and related to one another. The accuracy of these

accounts became the driving force for the discipline. It made possible the development of **historical linguistics**: the area of linguistics where linguists study how languages develop over longer periods of time, from one into another. The regularities observed in these investigations largely paved the way for the emergence of modern linguistics. For many linguists, therefore, placing phonetics and phonology at the core presents a basic fundamental structuring of the field of linguistics that one would expect any newcomer to be made aware of. So consider yourself suitably 'made aware'!

Accounts of the fine details of the sounds used in language come to play important roles again and again throughout the history of linguistics. More recently, in fact as recently as the mid twentieth century, it was again in the area of sounds and their combinations that linguistics moved into what might be termed its 'structuralist' phase: and this, and the extremely high degree of systematicity that it allowed, marked the real breakthrough to the linguistics of today. And again, very recently, within the last ten years, approaching again the basis of language in sounds has brought forth some very exciting and fundamental results in the area of **language change**, another area that we will sample below—demonstrating something of the truth of Sweet's assessment above.

This placement of phonetics and phonology is in many respects predictable. Language evolved as a sound-based communication system. Although we need nowadays to consider other forms of communication equally—for example, the complex combinations of language and other communicative means in the visual/written mode, or sign languages—the origin of the language facility in spoken language leaves it imprint in some of language's most fundamental processes.

Despite this, we will not in this introduction begin at the 'core'. This does not mean that we are to consider sound processes less important for language—it does mean that we are choosing a different way in: we will see why in a moment.

Returning to the diagram above, and moving outwards from its centre we arrive at the area of syntax. This is often further subdivided in a way that clearly reveals a cultural bias: in particular, with the continued attention to Latin and Greek throughout our 'Western' history, it has naturally been the kinds of linguistic phenomena found in these languages—particularly **morphology** (how to build words) and combinations of words into sentences (particularly considering the traditional case systems of nominative, accusative, etc.)-that have been taken as central concerns for linguistics. The features of complex morphology and 'conjugations' of nouns according to grammatical case (so-called 'case-marking') were even for a time seen as clear indications of the 'advancedness' and sophistication of a language. Languages with less than the full complement of case-markings and other morphological indicators were seen as degenerate and lacking in sophistication. This would all have been (and was) very different for linguistic traditions that grew starting from languages with other properties (e.g., Chinese, which has neither morphology nor grammatical case). It is then beneficial to keep in mind the possible cultural relativism of the tradition when thinking of what linguistics 'is'. The rest of this area-combinations of morphological units in grammatical constructions—has really only very recently seen significant advances. This is perhaps surprising, given the very old traditions of grammar that exist, but we will see some of the reasons for this below in detail.

Within the 20th century studies in these central, core areas of the diagram started achieving a host of very significant results. We will examine the most important theoretical tools and perspectives that made this possible in several chapters below—essentially the ways

that linguists had available for revealing linguistic *patterns* of an increasingly abstract nature began to be refined sufficiently to address language. This was one of the concrete fruits of structuralism in the area of linguistics.

But these considerable successes led some prominent linguists, for example and most prominently, Leonard Bloomfield (in, e.g., his 1933 work Language), to go so far as to say that it would not be appropriate (not 'scientific') to study the outer areas of the diagram before the central ones had been made into solid foundations upon which the rest could stand. Thus linguistics as a field of study was to be built up from the central core areas of phonetics, phonology and because syntax as a whole still presented quite a few problems in 1933—morphology. It was assumed that once these areas had been fully understood, then there would be a sufficient understanding of language to work out to some of the outer areas. This approach became quite established and was later voiced in the 'standard' introductions to the field; the following quote from Hockett, one of the most important linguists of the middle of the 20th century, combines nicely the 'behaviourist' commitments of Bloomfield and the notion of expansion outwards from the core.

"There must be no mentalism [...] There must be no circularity; phonological analysis is assumed for grammatical analysis, and so must not assume part of the latter." (Hockett, 1942:20f)

Although this strict progression in how to do linguistics is no longer followed—and some (particularly in Europe) never accepted it while it was in fashion while others came to reject it later as being too limited—we are still left with its legacy in how linguistics is 'traditionally' introduced to newcomers. Ideally we go through the circles from the innermost to the outermost. The ordering of the rings in the diagram then becomes the ordering of the introduction of material.

It is here that we will take a very different path into the area hopefully one that will lead you into the field with your own questions rather than questions (and answers) that are pre-given by how the field developed. We are presuming that many of the issues that are relevant for the newcomer lie not at the centre of the diagram but at the edges—in the contact of linguistics with other areas. We want therefore to avoid at all costs the danger that starting from the centre sometimes takes up so much time that we do not get to the outer two or three circles at all!

### 2.2 The 'text'-based view

"... the text is the main concern of the linguist..." (Firth, 1956)

We have taken some pains to show that the direction of approach to linguistics starting from the core of the circle diagram and moving outwards is certainly justified on several grounds. We have seen that it is how the field has developed historically and, as we shall also see in this introduction, it is within the central areas of linguistics that we get to learn the basic tools of the linguistic trade—to use a metaphor that we will return to below, the tools of linguistics can be likened to 'map-making' skills and we would be advised to be well practised in these before, say, agreeing to make a map to get Columbus to India. The tools find their most sophisticated form in the central areas of linguistics—particularly in syntax and grammar—and so this is where we will first meet them and practice them.

But, adopting a different narrative, the concentration on the centre can also be seen as a way of making sure that linguistics has an isolated subject matter that is insulated from the complexities around it. For example, the centremost areas are to do with sounds and can be studied in exactly the same way as the study of sounds within acoustics or of other parts of the body in biology. To understand how sounds are produced does not require placing language in its 'context of use' (naturally, understanding which sounds are produced when is another matter). Much of modern linguistics has, probably for a range of reasons, taken this viewpoint considerably further and applied it also to the areas of grammar and meaning. As we will see later, particularly in the area of structural linguistics—the modern area of linguistics descended from Bloomfield and others-the concern is with grammar as a coherent system in its own right and without any necessary contact to the use that is made of grammar for other purposes (the purposes around the edge of the diagram).

While this might seem a strange thing to want to do when studying language (part of the answer to the question of 'how systematic is it possible to be'), it has had some very beneficial results for our understanding of the kinds of structures that languages use. In many respects, it is *only because of this step* that some of the most significant recent advances in the understanding of language have taken place at all. It has made the detailed and precise study of grammar possible in a way that is scientific: that is, results are objective and can be repeated and do not rely on any vagaries of human interpretation or social context.

But, precisely because of its abstractness, it is also quite a difficult step to take in the beginning. Seeing sentences in texts as if they were disembodied, contextless objects of study that can be decomposed regardless of their meaning and use is a trick that requires considerable practice to do well and insightfully. To outsiders it also may not be particularly clear why this should be a trick worth learning. Nor is it then always clear—even to those who are very good at the trick—what this can tell us about those areas around the edge of the above diagram: that is, once we have taken sentences apart in ways reminiscent of, but very much more complex than, traditional 'grammatical analysis', can we put them back together again to understand better how the texts in which they occur work?

The separation of accounts of language and its use also received a considerable boost by a view proposed in the area of semiotics, rather than linguistics. Semiotics sees itself as the most general study of 'signs' and how signs 'mean'. Naturally, then, it is commonly argued that linguistics, as a study of linguistic signs, is a subdiscipline of semiotics. We will return to this only in our final chapter, rather than beginning, as some introductions do, with semiotics at the outset. For now, we can simply note that the semiotician C.W. Morris (1938: 6-7) suggested the extremely influential division of syntax semantics—pragmatics. One can see how this fits on top of the circle diagram above. This is a formalisation of a rather traditional view in many ways (and, as we shall see below, a simplification in many respects): it separates forms (syntax) from their meaning (semantics), and then places questions of usages of meanings-i.e., when it is appropriate to make some particular meaning rather than another-in a box labelled 'pragmatics'. Unfortunately, for many years syntax and semantics were rather restricted, which left the pragmatics box rather large. Many came to call the pragmatics box the 'pragmatics wastebasket': i.e., when one could not explain for some language phenomenon, it could always be pushed out to questions of usage, style, or fashion and be separated from the more 'central' areas of linguistics. Nowadays, as we shall see a little of in Chapter 4, the original definition of pragmatics has to be altered considerable to make sense of more promising accounts of 'usage' and, conversely, many phenomena that would have been called 'pragmatic' ten years ago have now been brought into the 'semantic' fold. So the division, although still often talked about as if 'natural', has some problems which detract from its appropriate use as a basis for an introduction to linguistics in which usage is one of the important areas we wish to address.

The 'centre-out' build-up of the study of language suggested by the circle diagram and supported by the semiotic distinction between syntax-semantics and pragmatics therefore presents a deep problem

for introductions to linguistics intended for those whose main interests lie around the edge of the circle. Much of what we will want to do with linguistics in fact occurs around this edge—in the interaction of language with the roles that language plays in society, in texts, in helping to form our mental capabilities, and so on. These are all complex areas that make the 'scientific' study of language difficult.

To try and help us with this and to keep *both* the centre *and* the edges of the linguistic circle in mind, we will in this introduction not proceed from the centre outwards. The basic mechanism by which language operates is **text**—from now on we will use this term in its linguistic technical sense to refer to any bit of language in use, whether that language be spoken, written, signed, or whatever. All that is said/written/signed is performed in the context of a text and that text is performed in the context of *other* texts—historically, culturally, or interactionally. Moreover, these texts are exchanged to achieve a variety of functions: uncovering the range of functions is also a crucial component of understanding the phenomenon of human language and linguistic tools are indispensable for this task.

Text and textuality—that is, what makes a text a text—are then the distinguishing features of the human language system that sets it apart qualitatively from all other communication systems. Because of this we will try never to loose sight of the fact that language is happening in a world of interconnected texts, and one of the fundamental roles of linguistics is to reveal how language creates and maintains that world quite systematically. In fact, all of language can be seen from the perspective of how it contributes to, and enables, the construction and exchange of texts that carry particular functions.

In our brief consideration of the definitions of linguistics in the previous chapter, we have already seen this at work. Our close literal interpretation of the linguistic forms of the definitions drew (although we have not seen it yet) exactly on the central core areas of linguistics—on a precise statement of what kinds of linguistic—in this case, grammatical—forms occur in a language. But we immediately turned this around and used it as an indication of meanings that are to be found around the edge of the diagram: because of the small-scale grammatical choices made in the texts, the texts as a whole took on further significance that placed them within different cultural discourses.

The need and motivation for the basic tools of linguistics can all be similarly motivated. For this the skills that need to be learned are:

• *analytic*: approaching texts with a particular set of tools so that we know more about those texts as a result, how the texts are like other

texts and dissimilar to others, how the texts fits into a community of texts, and how the text meets the specific and general needs of its writer(s)/speaker(s)

• *theoretical*: the basic concepts and tools used in linguistics, their origins and motivations, methodology.

Linguistics, and all its concepts, must be seen as a set of answers to problems—or as a toolkit for showing things and for fixing things. To this extent, then, we will be concerned primarily with linguistics as a kind of action; we will be 'applying' linguistic techniques to problems—the most basic problems that we will be considering here residing in the interpretation of texts. This falls within what some people term **applied linguistics**; so we will extend our definition of linguistics above to provide one for applied linguistics also:

### being purposefully systematic in your dealings with language in order to understand/solve/help with some 'real-world' problem.

The basic task of this introduction is therefore to show the methods and frameworks that have been developed within linguistics for being systematic with language and to suggest how these can be used for answering questions about texts.

The mention of 'real-world' problems is also deliberate. The days when linguistics was considered as an abstract academic study are, thankfully, now passing—many linguists, particularly those who have considered their work as contributing to some brand of 'applied linguistics', never accepted it in the first place. And yet this somewhat out-of-date view is still one that 'informs' many people's intuitive ideas of what linguistics is. Perhaps this comes from 'school' grammar classes, perhaps from bad press! –but it is a view that needs to be replaced. Society is increasingly one organised around communication and linguistics can reveal aspects of the process of communication that are difficult to see otherwise. This is leading to new career possibilities in situations where communication is critical, ranging from the teaching of communication skills in businesses, counselling, health care to designing web pages.

Note, finally, that although we are adopting a text-based path, this is not an introduction to the area of linguistics called **text linguistics**. We will address many issues that are central to the linguistics of texts, but we are still approaching linguistics in general. And one way in which this provides a further difference in orientation is that we will not be avoiding the core areas—something which, unfortunately, too many approaches to text linguistics do. We also must make it very clear that it is our strong belief that *without* the tools and methods of linguistics, a linguistic approach to texts is just not possible. There are a number of introductions to studying language that explicitly take a 'text-based' approach-we will apply some of them below-but one reoccurring statement made in such approaches is that you, the language user/speaker/writer, "already knows" the important things that there are to know about texts. This is, perhaps sadly, not at all the case-it is deployed as what we will describe below as an interpersonal rhetorical strategy to provide a sense of security. Even if it succeeds in this aim, it does a great disservice both to the reader and to linguistics. If you already 'know' how language and texts work, why read a book about it? Why study the complicated tools that linguistics provides for examining language and texts? And if you, the reader, knows it already, why have linguists wasted their time for three millennia, attempting to work out the needless complexities of the 'already-known'?

The complexities of languages and text are just that, they are complex. Without the tools that linguistics provides we have as little hope of understanding how they work linguistically as has a prospective microbiologist of coming to terms with small living creatures without a microscope. To take the analogy further, to say that we 'already know' about the linguistic details is the same as saying we 'already know' about details of microbiology and disease transmission because we can catch colds. We cannot therefore, even if our main focus of interest is purely around the edges of the circle diagram, or in the complexities of texts, make progress in understanding how language contributes to these phenomena without learning to use the basic tools for the job.

And that is what we attempt here.

Our examples will generally be texts, and we will apply our linguistic microscope to those texts to see what we may see. But first, we must build that microscope, learn its foibles and drawbacks, how to change the focus, to keep the mirror clean, and when to put it to one side and use a telescope instead!

### 2.2 Organisation of the introduction

The rest of the introduction is organised as follows. We will first take a look at some more of the additional meanings that text make by virtue of their fine-scale phonological, grammatical and lexical (i.e., word) choices. This will reinforce the point made above, that texts communicate much more than any simple interpretation of 'meaning' might suggest. Any text shows a great deal about its intended context of use and its context of origin; we see examples of this in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4 we move on to introduce the notion of linguistic theory in a bit more detail: not any particular piece or type of theory, but linguistic theory in general: why do we want such a thing and what can it do for us. In Chapter 5, we see how linguistic theory can be applied to produce our first models of the basic 'stuff' of language. In Chapter 6 we return to fine-detail grammatical description and outline a range of tests for investigating linguistic structure and introduce the basic constructs of the most prominent and well-known approach to linguistic structure available today, that of phrase structure. In Chapter 7, we then apply these tests in order to carry out a finer text analysis of the type shown in Chapter 3—again emphasising that structure is there to carry meaning. By this time, we should have gained considerable confidence that whatever language we encounter, we will at least be able to suggest reasonable ways of finding out more about its linguistic structure.

Chapter 8 then takes up a central issue of what kinds of meaning can be carried by various kinds of linguistic 'patterns'. Here we see that linguistic structure enables combinations of considerable complexity to be built up, each carrying a diverse range of meanings. Chapter 9 sets out more systematically what kind of linguistic 'units' participate in meaning-carrying patterns. Chapter 10 places our understanding of structure, grammar and semantics on a more systematic level still by introducing some of the most powerful descriptive tools currently employed in linguistics: linguistic features.

Chapter 11 places the entire discussion of the introduction in a historical context and adds in the crucial notions of language variation over time. Chapter 12 discusses ways of describing larger scale patterns constitutive of texts and which allow us to recognise different text types that themselves have many systematic properties. Chapter 13 concludes the introduction with a trip around those portions of the edges of the circle that we have not had time to introduce here.

Reading and references

The introduction to linguistics referred to in this chapter was:

Aitchison, J. (1992) *Teach yourself Linguistics*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Some very useful background reading can be found in:

D. Crystal (1997) *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language*. Cambridge University Press. [2nd edition]. H ASL 025 d/72(2).

particularly, §65 'Linguistic science' A description of 'neighbouring disciplines' is given in the Encyclopedia in the section on 'Interdisciplinary fields', p418 (it is not a coincidence that this is virtually the last page in the book!)

Some articles and books where linguistics and literary interpretation have been brought together are:

Halliday, M.A.K. (1971) Linguistic function and literary style: an enquiry into the language of William Golding's 'The Inheritors'. In: Chatman, S., (ed.) *Literary Style: a symposium*. New York : Oxford University Press.

Stubbs, M. (1996) *Text and corpus analysis: computer-assisted studies of language and culture*, London: Blackwell.

Toolan, M. (1998) Language in literature. Arnold.

Other historical references in the chapter:

Bloomfield, L. (1933) Language.

Hockett, Charles F. (1942) 'A system of descriptive phonology'. *Language* **18**: 3–21.

Morris, Charles W (1938/1970): Foundations of the Theory of Signs. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

A very readable introduction to rather more modern approach to semiotics and one which is easy to combine with much of the view of linguistics that we see in this introduction is:

Chandler, D. (1999) Semiotics: the basics. London: Routledge.

# 3 Places where meanings hide: a first look at texts and their properties

WHAT WE ARE DOING THIS CHAPTER.

In this chapter, we take some texts and pick them apart, increasing our understanding of where certain kinds of meanings are made in those texts. We will see that there are very regular patterns—indeed, without those regular patterns reliable interpretation of what texts intend would not be possible. To get us started looking at texts systematically and asking the questions above as well as the original question as to in which 'bits' of language meanings hide, we will consider some rather different texts. As mentioned a few times above, it is often very useful to consider different kinds of texts in order to have a more concrete feeling for how language can present things in very different ways in different contexts of use and for different purposes. Looking at single texts, or types of texts, can easily mislead as we get drawn into each text's particular, apparently 'natural' construction of a world or representation or interaction.

We will see that there is a very tight and reliable relationship between the fine linguistics details of texts and the particular situations of use for which those texts are appropriate. One particular way of thinking about the situations in which texts are used that offers a quite useful 'scaffold' or framework of interpretation is one developed initially for addressing questions of **register**, or **text type**, by Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1964). We will see how this is part of a wider set of linguistic tools later on, but for now we can just name three basic components of register: the **field**, the **mode**, and the **tenor**. When thinking of the context of use intended for any text we can approach this systematically by asking about:

- what is the text about? what kinds of activities are being described?
- what purpose is the text serving in the situation? is it explaining, or describing, or persuading? and what form is the language being given: is it written? is it spoken? is it being performed face-to-face or at a distance (e.g., by telephone)?
- what kinds of interpersonal relationships hold between those involved with the texts reception or production? do the speakers and hearers know each other well? are they in some kind of hierarchical social relation?

These three aspects correspond to the field, mode and tenor of a text respectively. Field is subject matter; mode is the role and manner of the text; tenor is the interpersonal relationships. If we consider any text from these three viewpoints, then we can be reasonably sure that we have already the majority of issues that will be significant when we come to try to explain and describe the text. In fact, we will see that there is a very tight match between linguistic details, the smallscale and subtle 'bits' of language used, and these rather more general issues of context and situation.

### 3.1 Some legal examples

Here is a text, for example: and the basic question to be considered is where did it come from? What were its 'conditions of production'? – i.e., who said it where and why?

"I have known Craig since I went to school. We were stopped by our parents going out with each other—I mean we have not gone out together until tonight. I was watching television tonight (2 November 1952) and between 8pm and 9pm Craig called for me. My mother answered the door and I heard her say I was out. I had been out earlier to the pictures and got home just after 7pm. A little later Norman Parsley and Frank Fazey called. I did not answer the door to speak to them. My mother told me they had called and I ran after them. I walked up the road with them to the paper shop where I saw Craig standing. We all talked together and then Norman Parsley and Frank Fazey left. Chris Craig and I then caught a bus to Croyden. We got off at West Croyden and then walked down the road where the toilets are—I think it is the Tamsworth road.

When we came to the place where you found me, Chris looked in the window. There was a little iron gate at the side. Chris then jumped over and I followed. Chris then climbed the drainpipe and I followed."

If you think of a situation involving the police, you are well on the right track. The text is drawn from a controversial and rather sad case. The text was presented in court as evidence against a man called Bailey; Bailey was a young man with learning difficulties, assessed as having an IQ in the bottom 1% of the population. Concerning this text:

• British police swore under oath that this text was a "verbatim record of a dictated statement of the accused, Derek Bailey"

• Bailey said it was not and that some of it was even made up.

Bailey lost his case and was executed for murder, the text from which the above is extracted played an important role in this. Subsequently it was established that Bailey could not have been where the police had alleged he was and so could not have been guilty.

This is an example of how texts are looked at in terms of what we think they should mean rather than in terms of what they are. There are certain, *systematic and linguistically demonstrable*, properties of the text that mean that it could not be a "verbatim record of a dictated statement" by anyone, let alone a statement by the young man in question here. What are they?

This is not an isolated example. Before considering some of these properties, lets look at another text, also brought in court as evidence—this time against Julie Bowers, accused of murdering her baby son.

"John and I were married on 23 Feb 85 and Ben was born 11 June 85 and is 2.5 years old and Dustin was born 26 Jun 87. Benjamin is allergic to chocolate and Dustin may be. Dustin was a happy go lucky kid, he'd play with Ben, go down around 2:30 pm every day for a sleep and went to bed around 8:00pm. He could get ugly and was a real mum's baby and would not go to strangers. If a stranger picked him up, he'd probably scream unless you give him something. On 14 Jan 88 I heard John get up. I think around 7:00am and John gave Dustin a bottle. It was about 8:45am when I got up and the children watched Sesame street. I started to get them ready around 10:45 am and left the house around 11:00am. I go down two sets of stairs to the back door of my car. I put Ben in the car first, our Pontiac Astre, blue. The vehicle was passed in the back. Ben climbed in the front seat and then placed Dustin in his car seat. I did not see anyone suspicious and did not speak to anyone. ... "

Concerning this text,

- Canadian police swore that it was a verbatim account.
- It was used as evidence that the accused was "cool and dispassionate" and therefore probably guilty as charged.

Again, *linguistically*, it is virtually impossible that such a text would be produced as a monologue verbal account from this or any other accused.

In both cases, the reasons range from the very obvious to the subtle. For example:

• there were no: local hesitations, false starts, self-corrections or fillers (hmms and ahhs),

• the texts turn out to include typical 'police' words: "vehicle", "rear door", "female passenger", and phrases (e.g., specifying the colour of the car in an 'apposition': "our Pontiac Astre, blue"),

• the texts include typical 'police' grammar: e.g., focus on times/places (almost every time it is possible to give a time or place the text does so—111 out of 136 times in the text as a whole—this is not normal and would be more indicative of a mental problem if encountered in normal dialogue), strange use of proper names, and a construction involving temporal information directly before the main verb of a sentence (e.g., "I <u>then</u> drove"--this construction occurred in

this text once in every 119 words; we can compare this to how often it occurs in normal discourse where a figure of around once in every 165,000 words has been cited!)

These can be observed even without applying linguistic tools—if one chooses to look: without the attitude of approaching texts systematically and purposefully it is easy for them to be overlooked.

Rather more 'hidden' is the *structure* of the texts themselves. As we will see later on, this is not to talk informally about something that is a matter of debate and interpretation: different kinds of texts (particularly those having differing *modes*) have regular, systematic kinds of structure that it is possible to describe and motivate—similarly to, but also interesting different from, the kinds of structures that one sees for grammar.

For example, the latter text particularly is simply not organised as narrative texts typically are. This is sometimes taken to the point of incoherence; consider the following extract from a little later in this 'verbatim report':

"I did not notice anyone unusual/suspicious. I was carrying Ben. By that time I left the bank. I just wanted to get the hell out of there, go home and relax. I have left both children in the car when they were pains before. If Dusty woke up when I was in the bank there is a 75% chance he would cry. When I came out of the bank I did not see anything suspicious."

These statements do not put together information as it would be presented in narrative and, crucially, this is not a matter of 'opinion'. The observation that this text is not a verbatim report is simply a statement of 'linguistic fact'. When we know the linguistic properties of verbatim reports giving information about some events, we can see that this text does not conform. Something is therefore wrong.

Interestingly, there *are* texts with this kind of structure; here is one cited by Hoey (2001, p19):

When you hold your hand over the flask bubbles come out of the bottom of the tube the air comes out and we're making vacume. When the bunsen burner flame is held over the flask the flame makes lots of bubbles. The air has come out and vacume is left. The water rises up to the tube and down. The water travels up and comes out of the tube at the top. All the water from the beaker travels up the tube and ends up filling full the flask at the top. This is a text from a ten-year old girl in a science class; the text has several problems as a piece of scientific writing, but more interesting here is to ask why the text appears in this form. Note that the teacher also may have not been inclined to particularly value this text even as a piece of early scientific writing. Placing the text back in its context of production makes what happened much clearer however. In the science class the teacher gives the pupils a list of instructions about how to do the experiment. What is more, the teacher often gives these instructions along with a set of questions that serve to focus the pupils attention during the work. In the present case, the teacher's instructions included the following steps:

- 1. Put your hands around the flask. What happens?
- 2. Now warm the flask more with the flame of the Bunsen burner.
- 3. Now let the flask cool while the glass tube is still below the surface of the water—what happens now?

If the pupils text is now mixed with these instructions we see the likely problem. The girl was answering questions that the teacher asked, simply writing these down as she carried out the experiment. The result is a less than successful text, because text is not normally structured in this way; but had the text been a conversation with the teacher, then the teacher would probably have been quite satisfied. As in many cases, the problem arises out of the language selection and its mismatch with the desired situation. It also shows the converse effect: instances of language will contain strong indications of their exact situations of use; one linguistic question is then to map out these traces so that we understand more of the precise relationship between language and context.

Returning to our Bowers legal text example we can suggest that a very similar state of affairs obtains, although one which has potentially many more serious consequences than a bad mark. The most likely origin of the text is again that is was compiled from answers that were given as responses to a series of questions. This can be seen again by 'filling in' the missing questions thus:

"I did not notice anyone unusual/suspicious. Where was Ben when you were in the bank? I was carrying Ben. By that time I left the bank. Where did you go after you left the bank? I just wanted to get the hell out of there, go home and relax. Have you ever left the children in the car before?
I have left both children in the car when they were pains before.

What would Dusty do if he woke up to find you gone?

If Dusty woke up when I was in the bank there is a 75% chance he would cry.

Did you see anything suspicious when you left the bank?

When I came out of the bank I did not see anything suspicious."

Then the text becomes a perfectly normal police interrogation and the incoherence disappears.<sup>1</sup> Now, while providing summaries of interrogations in the form of a text above is a perfectly legitimate and useful thing to do, the problem in this case was that the text then took on a life of its own and was used for completely different purposes in particular, to argue that the alleged speaker of this text was 'cold and dispassionate'. Since the text as presented was not spoken by the alleged speaker in the form presented anyway, any such use of the text as belonging to a completely different register, or text type, to what it actually was. (And, apparently, the text was only brought into court at all when it became clear to the prosecutors that the case, which they had previously thought to be an 'easy win', was starting to go badly for them.)

But, in this latter case, there was 'linguistic expert evidence' to hand that was able to demonstrate, systematically and beyond all reasonable doubt, that the text presented as evidence could not have been produced in the way that it had been claimed. It was not then accepted as evidence. Note that this is actually very similar to presenting a forged photograph in court as evidence—this is seen as something 'obviously' wrong but, because of the usual transparency of, and lack of attention paid to, 'unimportant' details such as grammatical, lexical and textual phrasing, it was less clear that the so-called verbatim account should have been accorded exactly the same status as a forged photograph. Expert evidence of this kind was not, unfortunately, available in the first case we described above however, with the consequences that we mentioned.

The two legal testimony texts used here, drawn from the area of 'forensic linguistics', were used to demonstrate very clearly one main

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Although there are also signs that the text has been tampered with grammatically, with some of the answers having been 'cleaned up'. Given our illustration of the importance of even grammatical selections for meaning in Chapter 1, it should be clear that this is also by no means an acceptable procedure when we are considering what are being presented as "verbatim accounts".

point. Texts contain much information concerning the situation of their production and they carry this with them regardless of whether this is known by their speakers/writers. These additional 'meanings' are in the text just as is the intended meaning of the text, but they are less often available to conscious control and, indeed, many speakers/writers remain unaware of them. These meanings are spread throughout a text and surface at many points. It is one task of linguistics to pin these points down, to find out at which points particular kinds of meaning may surface. Only when there is a reasonably detailed understanding of these possibilities, can we begin to be systematic concerning their appearance or non-appearance and to draw conclusions.

The points where information surfaces, and the kinds of information, also vary across languages and across time. These are not constants that can be established theoretically once and for all: they are the results of detailed 'empirical' studies—i.e., we must look at what is there, how texts in particular languages are organised, what meanings are expressed and how.

## 3.2 What bits of a text carry what meanings? – first steps towards text structure

We will now use some more focused examples to show some particular places that particular kinds of meaning surface. To make it clear that these places are not fixed and obvious, but instead are dependent on the particular language, we first consider a pair of contrasting texts in German and English within the same text type, that of the short author biography.

- A. Margriet de Moor, Jahrgang 1941, studierte in Den Haag Gesang und Klavier. Sie machte Karriere als Sängerin, besonders mit Liedern des Jahrhunderts. 20. Kunstgeschichts- und Architekturstudium in Amsterdam. Mit ihren beiden Erzählungsbänden Rückenansicht (1988) und Doppelporträt (1989) machte sie zum ersten Mal als Schriftstellerin von sich reden. Es folgte der Roman Erst grau dann weiß dann blau (1991), für den sie 1992 eine der literarischen Auszeichnungen wichtigsten in den Niederlanden erhielt. 1993 erschien ihr zweiter Roman Der Virtuose.
- B. Carol Shields was born and raised in Chicago and has lived in Canada since 1957. She studied at Hanover College and the University of Ottawa. Author of six novels, including *The Republic of Love*, which was shortlisted for the 1992

Guardian Fiction Prize, and *The Stone Diaries*, which was shortlisted for the 1993 Booker Prize. Carol Shields has also written three volumes of poetry and numerous short stories. She now lives in Winnipeg and spends each summer in France.

We can begin to see differences between texts that are systematic for their respective languages if we know where to look.

One position that is very loaded in English is 'the front of the sentence'. This position is linguistically significant in a way that other positions—such as 'the first word of the sentence' or 'the 27th. letter of the sentence' are not; it would make no sense to look at these latter parts of the sentence to see what was happening there—there is nothing systematic about what languages do with these positions and so one would fine a more or less random collection of linguistic material. The first position in the sentence is very different: this is used systematically. And, again, finding out which positions are used systematically and which not is part of the job of linguistics: finding out *where it makes sense to look for meaning*.

Dividing text A according to its first elements looks as shown on the next page. The red line running down the text marks off the 'first' elements from the rest. We see a range of elements to the left of the line, and which are therefore at the 'front' of their respective sentences. We have the name of the author, a pronominal reference to her, her areas of study presented simply as a nominal phrase (*studium*), an empty pronoun 'Es' followed by a relative clause introducing prepositional phrase 'für den', and finally a year '1993'. This is quite normal (and systematic) for texts of this kind in German.

But it is not normal and systematic for all languages. If we provide a similar diagram for the English biography given in Text B (also shown on the next page), we have a different picture. Again, just focusing on the elements to the left of the line we have the following: the name of the author, the conjunction 'and' linking two statements together, a pronominal reference to the author, another description of the author ('Author of six novels'), her name again, another pronominal reference, and a final conjunction 'and'.

### Biography (German): '<u>first' elements</u>

Margriet de Moor, Jahrgang 1941, studierte in Den Haag Gesang und Klavier.

<mark>Sie</mark>machte Karriere als Sängerin, besonders mit Liedern des 20. Jahrhunderts.

Kunstgeschichts- und Architekturstudium in Amsterdam.

Mit ihren beiden Erzä<u>hlungsbänden *Rückenansicht* (1988) und</u>

*Doppelporträt* (1989) machte sie zum ersten Mal als Schriftstellerin von sich reden.

*Es* folgte der Roman *Erst grau dann weiß dann blau* (1991),

für den sie 1992 eine der wichtigsten literarischen Auszeichnungen in den Niederlanden erhielt.

1993 erschien ihr zweiter Roman *Der Virtuose*.

### Biography (English): '<u>first' elements</u>

TEXT B

Carol Shields was born and raised in Chicago

and has lived in Canada since 1957.

She studied at Hanover College and the University of Ottawa.

Author of six novels, including *The Republic of Love*, which was shortlisted for the 1992 Guardian Fiction Prize, and *The Stone Diaries*, which was shortlisted for the 1993 Booker Prize.

Carol Shields has also written three volumes of poetry and numerous short stories.

She now lives in Winnipeg

anc spends each summer in France.

If we examined these texts in isolation, without thinking systematically, we might dismiss these selections on the left hand side of the red line as an accident of how the respective writers of these biographies selected to phrase their biographies and not to pay it any further attention. This would be incorrect. The respective properties of the English and German texts are in fact systematically related to how texts are structured in English and German: the first position in the sentence (more accurately, the 'clause'—which we will define below) is used to express particular meanings to do with how particular text genres structure their texts. And this is different in the two languages. The range of things that can appear in first position in German biographies (and many other genres) is far broader than the range of things that can appear in the corresponding genres in English.

We can show this clearly by considering the following text. It is a text written by a German student as a translation of a German biography.

In 1930 Janina David was born in Poland, the only child of a middle class Jewish family. She lost her parents during the war and left, after being rescued from the Ghetto in 1946, Poland. Two years she spent in an orphanage in Paris and emigrated then, shortly before her 18th. birthday, to Australia. She was granted Australian citizenship, worked in factories and received a scholarship to study arts and social sciences at the University of Melbourne. 1958 she returned to France. Now she lives in London.

If you think that this text reads rather poorly, you would be correct. There are a number of phrasing problems that could be corrected. However, no matter how many of these minor problems are cleared up, one big one would remain: it has the wrong kinds of elements in first position in its sentences. The range of elements selected: a date, a pronominal reference to the author, a length of time ('two years'), a further pronominal reference, and a further date is exactly the range seen above in the German text. It is not the range that is found in English texts of this kind and so it remains 'non-English'. Even speakers of English may not themselves be able to put their fingers immediately on why it seems disfluent and may well make nonsystematic suggestions for its improvement. But without correcting the range of elements that appears in the first position of its sentences, the text will remain awkward.

Examining a broader range of biographies in English and German will confirm that the selection of first element in a sentence is not something that can be left to the individual whims or style of a writer/speaker but is something that is strictly controlled by the language. This does not apply only to biographies. Consider the following news article in its original form in German.

Ferch - einen offenbar geistig verwirrten Mann hat die Polizei nach einer mehrtägigen Suche wohlbehalten aufgegriffen. Das Auto des 85jährigen aus Mönchengladbach war bereits in der Nacht zu Montag bei Ferch (Potsdam-Mittelmark) leer aufgefunden worden. Mit einem Polizeihubschrauber wurde den ganzen Montag das Gebiet abgesucht. Gestern morgen fanden die Beamten den Mann, bekleidet mit Oberhemd und Unterhose. Der entkräftete Rentner kam ins Krankenhaus.

A student translation of this text into English is the following:

After a search lasting several days, the police have found an obviously mentally confused man alive and well. The car of the 85-year-old man from Mönchen-Gladbach had been found empty already in the night to Monday near Ferch (Potsdam-Mittelmark). With a police helicopter, the area was searched all day Monday. Yesterday morning police officers found the man dressed in a shirt and underpants. The exhausted old-aged pensioner was taken to hospital.

Again you should see here some substantial problems—and many of these problems stem from the fact that the selections at the beginning of each sentence are still very much in the German pattern rather than the English pattern for this type of text; we will return to this and the previous example in order to describe more exactly what is wrong with these selections below.

As some final examples of what happens when this goes wrong, and to show that this is not restricted to mistakes by learners, we can consider the English translations for the following German sentences found in Inter-City-Express trains:



These English translations preserve the selections for the first elements in their clauses found in the German:

<u>At all seats</u> you can listen to 3 ICE Programmes (classical, pop, fairy tales) over the headphones.

<u>Screens to watch the ICE video programme</u> you will find in the backrests of the seats in the first class coaches.

And for this reason the translations are quite poor. English and German use the first position in a sentence for a particular kind of meaning—a meaning that is used to structure texts: this position cannot therefore be abused.<sup>2</sup>

How this works is that typically readers/hearers are given particular signposts during a text as to how they are to interpret the text: and these signposts have to be in placed that a reader/hearer can readily identify. There are two main concerns: (a) telling the reader/hearer how the text is being constructed, and the speaker/writer is organising his or her text; and (b) telling the reader/hearer what things in a text are new or newsworthy and which are to be taken as 'known', 'old' or 'non-controversial'. These two kinds of meaning are present in every sentence. They are expressed in similar ways: namely by a **pulse** of textual information that is sent out like light from a lighthouse. These pulses occurs at the beginning of a sentence, the second at the end.

These 'textual pulses' differ from those from a lighthouse in one respect. The one at the beginning of the sentence starts suddenly and fades slowly, while the one at the end of the sentence starts gradually and then stops suddenly. We call the first pulse the **thematic** pulse: it concerns the *thematic organisation* of the text. We call the second pulse the **news** pulse: it concerns the most salient, newsworthy piece of information in the sentence. We therefore have two general 'movements' in the sentence: one from the beginning of the sentence, involving decreasing thematicity, and one moving towards the end of the sentence, involving increasing 'news value'. These movements are indicated graphically as follows:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Interestingly, these messages seem to have been gradually improved over the past few years; but some problems still remain with the theme choices. It is clear that the improvements are not being made with any systematic understanding of the problems involved. This also serves to show us that linguistic data are everywhere!



The strongest part of the thematic pulse is called the **Theme**: this pulse quickly becomes weaker so that by the time we reach the finite verb of the sentence we are in the non-thematic part of the sentence, or **Rheme.** The strongest part of the news pulse is called the **News**: the increase from established **Given** information to the News can be much more gradual and can stretch over quite long parts of the sentence.

Whereas in English the thematic pulse is regularly associated with the front of the sentence as we have seen, the news pulse is not strictly associated with a position in the sentence at all: it is instead associated with the place in the sentence that is pronounced with the *strongest intonational prominence*—this means the part of the sentence which is said most loudly or with the greatest change in intonation. This can in principle occur anywhere in the sentence (even at the beginning!). The difference this makes to meaning is, generally, very clear. Thus, if we represent the News pulse with capital letters as is often done, we can see the difference quite readily between the following two utterances:

- Please give the BOOK to Mary.
- Please give the book to MARY.

We can make the difference clear by considering in which situations the two sentences would be said: the first would only be used in a context where it is clear that we are going to give something to Mary (i.e., this is Given), but we need to say what it is that we are going to give (i.e., this is News); the second would only be used in a situation where it is not clear that Mary is going to receive anything and so this information is News. These situations are not identical and so the particular forms of the utterances are not interchangeable: each one is only appropriate for its own context. In both cases we have the same elements at the beginning of the sentences though—which means that the Theme choices have not changed.

It is only in usual written language (i.e., written language that has not been extended artificially as we have just done above), where this option of intonational prominence is not available, that we can speak of the tendency for the strongest part of the news pulse to come at the 'end' of the sentence. But even in written language we can structure sentences so that they are difficult to read with the neutral sentencefinal stress. When this occurs, we are also moving the point of news prominence away from the end of the sentence. In such situations, the rest of the sentence that follows the main point of the news is strongly indicated as 'given', 'established', 'non-controversial' information. It is as if once the news pulse has been given, there is no 'news' energy left in the sentence and we must wait for the next sentence before a new pulse occurs.

An open question that we have not yet considered here, but which we will need to clarify considerably, is just what it means to be in the "first" position in a sentence: where this starts is (usually!) fairly obvious, but where does it end? How can we know where to say that the first position has ended? We will return to this issue below: for now we can note that this is another question for which linguistics should provide an answer. The first position is not something arbitrary: what we consider to be the first position should correspond to that part of the sentence that does some particular linguistic work— in this case, a bit of the sentence that is particularly significant for how texts are structured.

# 3.3 Some other places where meanings hide: negotiating social relationships

The first position in a sentence (or, more accurately, a 'clause') is not the only position which carries a particular kind of meaning; it is actually practically the simplest to find—most linguistically significant places for looking for meaning require us to do a bit more work to find them. As noted above, even identifying the 'first' position needs to be made more precise (i.e., first letter?, first word?, first 'chunk'?)—many of the other positions of importance within texts and sentences cannot even be talked about without introducing some more linguistic vocabulary.

The following text is taken from the recording of a radio programme: the radio programme is being made on the forecourt of a petrol filling station, the radio programme presenter, Max, is stopping people at the filling station in order to ask them questions for his show. He has just finished asking questions of a man, Sid, and is about to ask questions of a woman.

	radio programme we're doing. The first of the		
	questions is <i>What</i> would you say language is?		
WOMAN	Language well it's the dialogue that people speak		
	within various countries.		
MAX	Fair enough aaand <i>what</i> would you say it's <i>made</i> out		
	of?		
WOMAN	(Pause, 8 seconds) It's made out of (puzzled		
	intonation)		
MAX	Hmmm.		
WOMAN	Well I don't know you'd tell what it's <i>made</i> out of		
	It's a person's <i>expression</i> I suppose is it?		
MAX	I haven't got the answers, I've only got the questions		
	(laughing)		
WOMAN	(simultaneously: small laugh)		
SID	That's not <i>bad</i> though.		
WOMAN	Well it's an expression, it would be a person's		
	expression wouldn't it?		
SID	That's a good answer.		
MAX	Thank you very much		

This interaction does not go very smoothly. In his first response to the woman's answer, Max already indicates by several linguistic means that this was perhaps not quite the answer that he was looking for: both the 'fair enough' and the drawn out 'aaand' signal this. From this point on, the woman's answers become increasingly uncertain. Throughout the interaction, the language selected is managing a complex and changing configuration of *social roles*, and these are strongly indicated by particular places in the sentences used since they are *not* being simply guessed at or communicated by telepathy!

The first question that Max puts is a request for information, but he does not simply say:

"Tell me what language is!"

or

"What is language?"

Instead he used the much more complex form:

"what would you say language is?"

A consideration of what *could have* been said but wasn't often helps place the meanings of what actually *was* said in a clearer perspective. We can expand on this last form here in a number of ways; for

example, we could explain it as a shorthand form of some statement such as:

- "(If I were to ask you what is language, then) "what *would you say* language is?"
- "(I might not even ask (because I cannot presume to impose) ... and even if I were to ask, you might either not answer, or answer only hypothetically) ... "what *would you say* language is?"

These forms are often recognised as 'having something to do with politeness'. But politeness does not happen in a vacuum, and the forms used here in fact go considerably further than merely signalling that the speaker is being polite. The motivation for the expansion here is to be found in the precise social roles being enacted: this is not a neutral, 'unembodied' seeking of information—no interaction is. What we have here is an example of language enacting *gendered roles*, and particularly some role combination such as *middle-aged to elderly* and *middle-class to middle-class*.

Meanings of this kind are also found in particular places in the sentences that are used: not, however, in one simple place such as the beginning of the sentence, but in a number of rather more complex positions. One such position is around the main verb of the sentence: the bit of the sentence that expresses the tense selected. This is because this part of the sentence not only expresses tense, it also expresses certainty—and certainty is precisely the commodity that is traded in when delicate social relations are at issue.

We can see this in another pair of sentences that are taken, slightly adapted, from a pair of long newspaper articles that we will return to in Chapter 7 below. These sentences, each taken from the beginning of their respective articles, are describing the same state of affairs.

Telecom employees are likely to strike within a week	Industrial action seems certain to hit the nation's
	telecommunications network from early next week

certaintyHere again, the unexpression<br/>packaged rather differentlyof certainty is the meaning that is being<br/>in the two news reports—and where that<br/>packaging is occurring is around the main verb. In the first text, we<br/>see certainty about an uncertainty 'are [certain] likely [uncertain]',<br/>whereas in the second text we see uncertainty about a certainty 'seems<br/>[uncertain] certain [certainty]'. Just as we saw with the selections of<br/>seems first element in certaintees, and even more with the presence or absence<br/>or humans in the definitions of linguistics, these selections are rarely<br/>uncertainty random:<br/>the two uncertainteesuncertaintythe two uncertaintyversADJECTIVE

being reported and this difference appears in different meanings that are made in a variety of different places in the corresponding texts. In this way, the collections of 'theoretically' independent choices made in a text tend in fact to point in particular directions in a coherent and organised fashion. Texts thus go a long way to supporting particular lines of interpretation while cutting off others. But, again, without some fairly sophisticated tools for knowing where to look for the differences, the precise import of different choices can easily be missed.

Another place to look for meanings to do with the social interaction is at the end of sentences in a dialogue. For example, it is here that we find in the contributions of the woman (and only of the woman) the forms:

It's a person's *expression* <u>I suppose is it?</u>

Well it's an *expression*, it would be a person's *expression*, <u>wouldn't</u> <u>it?</u>

These so-called 'tag' questions (and not only tagged, but also *modalised*—'suppose', 'would') are again clear places where a meaning of increasing uncertainty is being expressed.

Further evidence for the gender differences in the linguistic choices being made can be found when we compare how Max phrased his opening question to the woman with how he phrased it to Sid, the previous victim. For the woman the question takes the form "... questions very easy to answer..." whereas previously to Sid the phrasing was: "Two questions that you can answer briefly..." These can be contrasted as follows:

• to Sid: "briefly" [i.e., you are likely to be busy, to have things to do, but you can answer this briefly]

• to woman: "...easy..." [i.e., you are likely to be nervous, not used to dealing with definitions, but this is easy (even) for you]

Choices such as this are being taken and enacted *in every interaction*. Each choice might again, as with the selection of what comes first in a sentence, look like stylistic or individual variation on the part of speakers/writers without any further particular consequences or reason. But when choices are made in systematic ways repeatedly across a text, across a collection of texts, or across the style of discourse of an entire group of the population, these choices are no longer 'individual' and take on a far broader significance. Again, it is the job of linguistics to reveal this significance. The choices that are made around the main verb extend to include one further extremely significant choice in English: the selection of grammatical Subject. English and German are very different in the role that this grammatical function plays—that is, the meanings of grammatical Subject in English and in German are very different, they are used for different reasons. This developed over a long period and coincides with one of the main typological differences between modern English and German. Consider the following sentences and how you would most naturally say them in German:

- This hotel forbids dogs.
- She wants to be forgiven.
- Everything in and about the house would be taken such excellent care of! (Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, Chapter III, 1818)

If you have problems, or are led to produce sentences with rather different structures, then this is a direct consequence of the fact that the grammatical Subject in English and that in German have long gone their separate ways. And, again, as repeatedly emphasised: this is a *systematic* and *reoccurring* property of the two linguistic systems involved. We are not concerned with idiosyncratic exceptions here.

To talk about these issues more easily, we will give them some names: the part of the main verb that is particularly concerned with expressing tense and time will be called the **Finite** part of the verb (to be thought of in contrast to 'infinitives', which are often (incorrectly) thought of as not carrying tense information). The combination of the Subject and the Finite elements in a sentence will be called the **Mood** of the sentence. The Mood part of a sentence is particularly important for interaction and dialogue—indeed, as the following example shows, English scarcely needs anything else in order for interaction to proceed!

John:	Where did you get that Mars bar?
James:	Bill gave it to me at lunch time.
John:	No <mark>he didn't</mark> .
James:	Yes <mark>he did</mark> .
John:	He did not.
James:	Did!
John:	Did not.
	<b>I saw</b> you take it from Mom's secret hiding
	place.
James:	You did not.
John:	Yes <mark> I did</mark> .
James:	It's mine anyway.
John:	<b>I want</b> one too. [crying]
Mum:	What's all this noise about? If you can't play
	outside without fighting <b>come</b> inside and <b>do</b>
	your homework.

This is a simple children's dialogue in fact written by a child. It shows that the basic function of the Mood element in English is understood very early. If we highlight the Mood elements in this dialogue as shown below, then we can get a good sense of what Mood does in English. The selections in the Mood element carry the interactional force of a message: whether it is making a question, a statement, or giving orders. This is signalled simply by the relative order of the Subject element and the Finite element. Changing this order changes the 'communicative force' of the utterance. Because the Mood element is the centre of interactional action, it is then not surprising that it is often possible to omit all other information. There are two segments in this dialogue where the interaction degenerates to a simple sequence of rejecting what was said before: this interactional work can be done by the Mood element alone.

When language becomes more sophisticated and moves into adult usage, the Mood element also becomes more complex. But its basic function of signalling the interactional status of its message remains. In the following interaction we again have a very clear use of the Mood element for managing the interactional roles being taken up by the dialogue participants.

Speaker 1	And then at that time did you give him the gun?
Speaker 2	It was probably about that time.
Speaker 1	Did you have at that time some talk about the incident?
Speaker 2	I did.
Speaker 1	And at that time, was the man R still in the back room?
Speaker 2	Yes, I think he was.
Speaker 1	Perhaps I should ask you as a matter of finality, were
-	you in the lounge room when Mr. R was escorted
	through the house?
Speaker 2	No sir, I don't think so, no.

The diagram to the right below again picks up the Mood selections that have been made in this dialogue. In addition to the basic ordering between Subject and Finite that signals whether a question is being

made or not, we also see additional elements that are typically considered part of the Mood element: these are indications of certainty as we also saw in our radio text above; here: 'probably', 'I think', 'perhaps', 'think so'. This is the main way in which adult language is more

Speaker 1	<u>did</u> you	Q
Speaker 2	It <u>was</u> probably	
Speaker 1	<u>Did</u> you	Q
Speaker 2	I <u>did</u> .	
Speaker 1	<u>was</u> the man R	Q
Speaker 2	<i>I think</i> he <u>was</u>	
Speaker 1	Perhaps I <u>should</u>	
	<u>were</u> you	Q
Speaker 2	I <u>don't</u> think so	

developed in the Mood area than children's language: there are far more possibilities present than a simple 'yes' and 'no': the space between these can be drawn out almost indefinitely far. This is part of a relatively recent area of linguistics to be developed, and goes under the names of **appraisal, evaluation** or **authorial stance.** 

#### 3.4 Basic activities: processes, participants and circumstances

The kinds of meanings that we have seen in the previous examples are different to what is generally considered to be *the* meaning of a text or sentence. When people are asked about meaning, they often first respond with something like the story that a text tells: who did what, when, to whom, etc. Here we will take this notion apart a bit further—systematically of course—and see that even here there are additional meanings that are being made by any text. These additional meanings revolve around the choices of *how* activities are being presented and *just what information is included and what not*. The first detailed division that we will consider is the following. Any event can be broken down into three components:

- the **Process**: what is happening, what is going on, ...
- the **Participants**: who or what is directly 'participating' in what is going on,
- the **Circumstances**: where, when, why, etc. the event is happening, going on, etc.

These three components are the means that language itself provides for breaking up an event and talking. We will see that this is a structure that most, if not all, languages of the world impose *grammatically* on what their speakers talk about. The Process is in many ways the most important member: without something going on there is nothing to say; but most Processes require Participants in order to occur at all, so Participants are also quite important. Circumstances are, however, by definition peripheral; they are not essential to an understanding of what is going on, they provide additional framing of the event under discussion. A simple example of this decomposition of a sentence is the following. Already it should be clear that it is not possible to state for any event in the world that such-and-such an entity *must* be the Participant and something else *must* be a Circumstance: these choices will be made by the speaker/writer and will themselves therefore provide an additional layer of meaning to the created text.

This three-way decomposition of an event is shown in the diagram on the right. In this graphical representation, we see the Process, 'chasing',



clearly at the centre. What is going on is a 'chasing' of some kind. But without Participants, there could be no chasing: here we have two, a 'chaser' (the lion) and a 'chased' (the tourist). With just this information we have sufficient information to know what kind of event is at issue. But we can also provide additional circumstantial information, such as where (through the bush), when or how (lazily) the chase is proceeding. As we can also see here, it is not necessary to have every kind of Circumstance possible: they are generally quite optional.

We can go a long way to recognising Processes, Participants and Circumstances in a text even without further linguistic apparatus. But, as we shall below, there will be cases where, with the description given so far, we might not be sure whether we have an event to be described in these terms or not. This is because all languages provide a variety of different ways of expressing events, and not all of these appear as combinations of Processes, Participants and Circumstances. One way of at least getting started is to consider the kind of *linguistic unit* being discussed: Process, Participants and Circumstances in fact only apply to one kind of linguistic unit: the grammatical object called the **clause.** There are then many opportunities for expressing in texts various happenings, but not all these choose to present them as events (which is itself, as we shall now see, itself an extra meaning).

Some examples of this variety of packaging from a newspaper text that we will use again below can be seen in the following sentence.

Mr Harvey, aged 25, was knifed to death in a savage attack after he and Tracie were pursued by another car in a 'cat and mouse' chase near Alvechurch, Worcestershire.

In this sentence there are rather more candidates for 'events' than can (or need) to be described in terms of Processes, Participants and



Circumstances. In particular, from this sentence we know that previously Harvey had been involved in a 'savage attack'—surely some kind of event—and that there was a 'cat and mouse' chase—also some kind of event. Going further, we could also say that since Harvey died in the attack, there is the further event of a death.

What is then significant for us here is the fact that these events *have* not been presented as such in the text. Both the attack and the chase appear here as 'objects'—an attack, a chase—just as linguistics was presented as an object in the definitions of linguistics we saw in Chapter 1. Clearly, this is not something that corresponds to any reality in the world: the selection of how to express particular events is a decision of the speaker/writer. But, as always, consequences follow from these decisions. If something is presented as an object, then it cannot be questioned—it is not something that the speaker introduces as a new part of the story and it does not enter into the Mood structure introduced in the previous section; it is part of the props, the background objects around which new events are constructed. And this is, indeed, one of the major motivations for presenting events as objects: they are 'old', non-negotiable pieces of information. They are removed from the timeline of the narrative-in-progress. It is only when an event is presented linguistically as a clause, with its constituting Process, Participant, Circumstance configuration that it is, linguistically speaking, presented as an event.

It is worth noting that this is not only a 'negative' decision: choosing to present an event as an object itself opens up several new possibilities that are not available when it appears as a clause: for example, consider how we might express the classification 'cat and mouse chase'. Objects can (in English and German) be classified and broken up into ever finer classes and subclasses. Thus we have a particular kind 'chasing' event, one with some element of teasing and cruelty. Clauses do not support this kind of progressive subclassification—we would need to resort to the rather clumsy 'they were chased in a manner similar to that employed by cats with mice' or something similarly unwieldy.

This situation opens up several problems—for example, because we can no longer rely purely on our naive understanding of what an event is, we need to look to see how it is being expressed in a text. This requires that we develop further ways of being sure that a text is using a clause rather than some description of an object. Wanting to recognise clauses so that we can in turn look at the Processes, Participants and Circumstances means that we need to know just what is a clause and what is not. This is not possible without further linguistic constructs and so we will turn to this in detail in the next chapter. To finish off this chapter first, though, we will provide some further examples both of the kinds of meanings that find their way into Processes, Participants and Circumstances and of the consequences of these selections for texts as a whole. Just as we have seen for the first position in the sentence, and the position around the main verb, the 'positions' defined by Process, Participants and Circumstances are used for very specific purposes.

The kind of analysis performed when we set out the Process, Participants and Circumstances in a text is called **transitivity** analysis. By examining carefully what has been presented as Processes, Participants and Circumstances and what has not, we can often learn considerably more about how the text is creating a particular view of the world: it is precisely because of the fact that speakers/writers *select* what they want to appear as Participants and Circumstances makes this selection interesting for texts. Any time that a choice can be made, then there are meanings that are being made with that choice. Being able to recognise Processes, Participants and Circumstances opens up for our inspection a far broader range of positions where meanings are being made than the positions we have seen previously.

3.4.1 Taking information out

As an example, we will first examine another simple example of information being 'hidden'. The text (shown on the right) is another rather simple piece of news writing, describing a state of affairs

causing some concern to a local council. To carry out the analysis, we need simply to look at what kinds of things are used as Participants and what kinds of things appear as Circumstances. This will generally tell us a surprising amount about the organisation of a text and its particular meaning—in particular, the 'world' that the text accordingly brings into existence.

The article starts:

Unsheeted lorries from Middlebarrow were still causing problems by shedding stones on their journey through Warton village.

This is quite a complicated sentence as it chooses to have rather complex Participants and Circumstances. The first step in taking the sentences of a text apart is always to look for the Process, the main event (or state) that is being described. We must always find the Process first because it is only through the Participants and Process that the Circumstances have any meaning. That is, the Participants are participants in the particular Process that we find, and the Circumstances the particular are circumstances in which that Process occurs. The Process in this first sentence is carried by the words 'were ... causing': i.e., something was causing something.

We can then fill in the Participants by asking what was causing what. This uses a trick that we will develop substantially in subsequent

## Quarry loadshedding problem

**UNSHEETED** lorries from Middlebarrow Quarry were still causing problems shedding by stones on their journey through village. Warton members of the council parish heard their at September meeting. The council's observations have been sent to

have been sent to the quarry management and members are hoping to see an improvement.

chapter: by asking particular kinds of questions, we can often make a linguistic structure tell us about its own organisation. That is because the question picks out particular aspects of that organisation, which we already implicitly understand, in a way that we can readily see. Such questions are called **probes.** The probe questions and answers relevant here are:

Probe question	Participant
what was causing something?	Unsheeted lorries from
	Middlebarrow
what was being caused?	problems

We then go on and look for Circumstances—i.e., bits of the sentence that tell us more about the circumstances in which this particular event of causing was occurring. As indicated above, these are answers to probe questions concerned with 'when', 'where', 'how', etc. They are further indicated when we can leave them out of the sentence without making the sentence ungrammatical. There are two Circumstances in this example sentence, as indicated by the following questions and answers:

Probe question	Circumstance
when was something causing	still
something?	
how was something (the problem)	by shedding stones on their
being caused?	journey through Warton village.

This example also shows us one of the things that makes recognising Participants and Circumstances more difficult: sometimes they can have descriptions of *other* events inside them. Thus the 'how'-



Circumstance here is itself an event, the event of shedding stones. Also, as typically the case when we have such 'dependent' events, we do not need to make all of their Participants and Circumstances fully explicit if this would mean repeating information already given. Thus one of the Participants of this dependent event has been omitted—the 'shedders' of the stones have been left out because it is obvious that these are the same ones as are 'causing the problems'. We will return to this using of events within other events when we discuss linguistic *structure* in more detail. For the

moment we can see that we have the kind of structure shown on the left.

There are further complexities here and we will see in the Chapter 6 that we can take this sentence apart into considerably more significant parts, all of which carry some aspect of the complete sentence's meaning.

What we focus on here is asking what kinds of objects, what kinds of entities, are selected by the writer of the article to be the Participants. And here we have the clear selection of an explicit cause of the problem discussed: 'unsheeted lorries from Middlebarrow'. It is therefore not explicitly stated that any particular person or people are to blame, the causers of the problems are the lorries and the fact of their being unsheeted (that is, they do not have a tarpaulin over their load to prevent odd bits and pieces from falling off during their journey). These particular causers of a problem are also maintained in the Circumstance: not only do these lorries cause problems, they also shed stones-again there are no signs of individuals who might be responsible for this state of affairs. The closest to some kind of explicit attribution of responsibility comes later in the article, where we are informed that the 'management' of the quarry has been informed. Such avoidance of, or its opposite, direct attribution of, authority is very common in news articles and is employed for a variety of reasons-these reasons range from avoiding law suites, to deliberately pointing at particular individuals or groups as being responsible, to bad writing-where some kind of 'newspaper-ese' is adopted in the misguided belief that this is 'how one writes news paper articles'. It is generally entertaining to go through several news articles and examine just where responsibility is being attributed and where it is being withheld.

#### 3.4.2 Putting information in

Just as selection of Participants can leave certain information out, selection can also add information in, and that information may not be the information that the text at first glance might be thought to be considering. An example of this is the news article below. This is, at first glance at first glance—i.e., at the headline ("The Para's new leader: He'll do his job well says major's wife") and the caption for the large picture ("Major Keeble ... will lead the Para's into battle")— might justifiably be thought to be about Major Keeble. Below is a summary of the transitivity analysis: the Processes, Participants and Circumstances for each of the events/states in the text that is presented linguistically as such—i.e., by a clause.



Parachute Battalion spoke last night of her fears for her husband's safety.

As she played in the sunshine with her four children, Jenny Keeble said she hoped her husband would not have to go into battle again.

to go into battle again. She said: "I pray he and his men have done enough. But if they do go on I know that he is a man who will do his job to the best of his ability and I am certain he and the 2nd Parachute Battalion will succeed. Major Christopher Keeble, a 40-year-old devout Roman Catholic, is to succeed Colonel Herbert Jones who died leading his men against an Argentine machine-gun post in the battle for Goose Green. Yesterday Jenny Keeble's family and friends gathered around in the garden of her old vicarage home—a rambling Tudor building at Maddington on Salis-bury Plain—for a picnic afternoon as she tried to maintain an air of normility for the children's sake-

Major Keeble ... will lead the paras into battle



This transitivity analysis shown in the following table makes it very clear that actually the text is hardly about Major Keeble at all. We should probably have got this impression from reading the text through, and if we did, then the linguistic analysis makes it very clear why. The table divides the Participants up into two columns-the leftmost Participant is the main 'Doer' or 'Be-er' in the clause, which in this text is also generally the grammatical Subject; the rightmost Participant is the one or thing who is 'done to'. Again, although transitivity analysis allows us to make much finer discriminations, we shall not focus on this in this course and so for the time being stay with these rather 'pre-theoretical' descriptions. Just counting in the columns we find that Jenny Keeble is employed 9 times and Christopher Keeble only 5 times: so it would be difficult to read the text as being simply 'about' the major. But the analysis goes further: if we look at *where* the references to the major and the wife occur, then we see that there are bigger differences. All but one of the references to the major are embedded within statements, knowledge, claims or prayers of Jenny Keeble: they do not occur as independent statements.

PARTICIPANT	PROCESS	PARTICIPANT	CIRCUMSTANCE
The wife of the new CO of the	spoke		last night
2nd. Parachute Battalion			of her fears for her husband's
Janny Kaabla	said		safety
Jenny Keeble	saiu		with her 4 children
she	hoped	her husband would not	
		have to go into battle	
		again	
She I	said		
he and his men	have done	enough	
they	do go on	enougn	
I	know		
he	is	a man who will do his	
		job to the best of his	
		ability	
I	am	certain	
he and the 2nd Parachute Battalion	will succeed		
Dattanon			
Major Christopher Keeble, a	is to succeed	<b>Colonel Herbert Jones</b>	
40 year-old devout Roman		who died leading his	
Catholic,		men	
Jenny Keeble's family and	gathered		in the garden of her old
friends	around		vicarage home
			for a picnic afternoon
she	tried to	an air of normality	for the children's sake
	maintain		

Thus the text only gives us access to information about Christopher Keeble through the wife.

This should then raise the question as to why it appeared as a front page story at all: a wife's view of her husband, her knowledge and prayers, do not often make it on to the front page of a national newspaper (which is itself not a coincidence of course!). When we place the article in the context of the conflict between Argentina and Britain, and the increase in voices on the British side against the conflict and criticisms of the sense in sending British soldiers (portrayed again overwhelmingly as male), then the article becomes more of a presentation of a role model: look, this wife is doing what she should, standing by her husband and supporting the job that he has to do "while maintaining an air of normality for the children's sake".

With this function, the structure of the text as creating a world where soldiers go off to battle and the wives stay with the children and pray is readily seen to fit in to the discourses occurring at that time. The information in the text could have been structured in endless other ways—but it was not; and these systematic choices make meanings over and above what may appear to be the meaning on the surface.

#### 3.5 A summary of the different kinds of meanings made in texts

We have started with a sketch of some of the places where meanings are systematically made in texts: this is systematic in that it is part of how the language system works. It is not that speakers/writers may sometimes choose to place some meaning somewhere, the structure of the language system of English (any most, if not all, other languages) itself requires that particular kinds of meaning appear in particular places: part of the task of linguistics is to uncover just what those places are and to describe what kinds of meanings occur there. The distinct kinds of meanings seen here are themselves systematically organised and so it is worthwhile getting clearer about their distinct contributions to the meanings of texts as a whole. The *kinds* of meanings found in texts and expressed through sentences are thus themselves describable. Here we name them and make them explicit so we can talk about them later, as well as follow in more detail how they are expressed in texts.

In our biography examples above we looked at the role played by the 'first' element in sentences. This was found to be systematic and was different between English and German. But the meaning of the selection for first position is similar in both languages: this selection serves to organise the text: it provides a framework for the reader/hearer to interpret how the writer/speaker is choosing to select their information. In the English biographies this framework was generally provided by the author and the author's works, whereas in German the biographies were also being structured by referring to the time of occurrence of particular events in the author's life. This kind of meaning-i.e., meaning particularly concerned with how a text is being organised—is called textual meaning. It is a kind of meaning that is essential for texts to be perceived as well organised and coherent. We cannot avoid making textual meanings, the only question is how well we select them for our purposes when creating text. Quite literally, if we get our textual choices wrong, then we will have given false signposts to our readers and hearers; and that can only make our intended meaning more difficult to follow. Different kinds of text types, or genres, employ different kinds of signposting and, again, it is the job of (those who do) linguistics to investigate these differences and to describe them.

Interpersonal meaning In our radio interview examples we were concerned with a rather different kind of meaning: the meaning of expressing certainty or not, of enacting social roles, of showing how strongly we are

Textual meaning

making statements in a dialogue, etc. Because this kind of meaning is concerned with interpersonal social relationships, it is called **interpersonal meaning.** As we saw, the place that is typically of most importance for expression interpersonal meaning is the Mood element of sentences: this is the 'interpersonal' centre, the place where the interpersonal action happens. Thus selections in and around the Mood element are a direct embodiment and enactment of particular social relations as mediated via language.

Both of these kinds of meaning are rather different to what is often thought of as 'the' meaning of a statement or text: the basic 'who did what to whom when why and how' kind of meaning that we saw in the final two newspaper text analyses. This latter kind of and meaning, because it is concerned with how our ideas about the world are structured and organised, is called ideational meaning. The particular subtype of this kind of meaning, that to do with organising our experiences of the world in terms of events and doers and states and objects and qualities that we saw in the transitivity analyses, is then called experiential meaning—precisely because it is how the language and our selections within the language represents for ourselves and our hearers/readers aspects of our experience. This was also largely the kind of meaning that was being manipulated in the examples of different definitions of linguistics with which we begun: while the grammar of some of the definitions was setting up an experience of linguistics as a kind of object or as an autonomous actor in its own right, the grammar of the definitions established linguistics as something done by people.

These different kinds of meanings are summarised in the diagram below. We will see later that there is a further subtype of ideational meaning. We will also see that each of these kinds of meaning surfaces in characteristic places and in characteristic kinds of linguistic constructions. They are, therefore, an important part of understanding how languages are structured and how languages are capable of meeting such diverse purposes and requirements and offer a useful classification, or map, of the territory to be covered in any analysis of texts.

Ideational meaning transitivity



Each of these kinds of meanings relates to particular aspects of the situation in which language is used, or in which the language is intended to be received. And one of the amazing things about language—and about sentences and clauses in particular—is that each such sentence or clause makes all of these kinds of distinct meanings at the same time, and yet we can recover that meaning usually without too much difficulty. We might not be aware that we have recovered the interpersonal and textual meanings, but we have. It has taken



linguistics (and linguists) a long time to realise that these kinds of meanings are all present—in fact, the first compelling statement of their existence and consequences for describing language is generally attributed to Bühler's (1934) Sprachtheorie and his organon model. Primarily because of his psychological background, Bühler saw language essentially mediating expressions as between 'sender' and 'receiver' concerning objects and situations. This should clearly suggest just how

much of linguistics has happened very recently in terms of the age of the discipline as a whole.

The three kinds of meanings described here—collectively termed **metafunctions**—differ somewhat from those outlined by Bühler, who, again because of his direct connection with psychology, placed considerably less emphasis on the grammatical patterns that carry the differing kinds of meanings that we have now seen—but the direct line of descent is nevertheless clear. That is one of the essential developments in linguistics that we want to bring out here—we are looking at ways of uncovering the meanings made in texts, but if this is to be done *linguistically*, then we need to find concrete, identifiable linguistic evidence. That evidence can be very subtle. As we go more into the field, we will see that the evidence consists of regular patterns of considerable complexity and which are not immediately obviously simply from a superficial reading of the linguistic 'data'. And it is to

make these patterns visible at all that we require the more complex linguistic tools of linguistic analysis.

And so, although it has long been known that uses of language cover a variety of communicative functions, what we are beginning to see here is the beginnings of a much tighter linkage between what we can see in language-the concrete linguistic forms and patterns-and the functions that we can presume that language is carrying out. This relates directly to how we begun this chapter: not only do we see a broad correspondence between the kinds of situations that language occur in and the grammatical forms and meanings that occur in the language, in fact we have a more structured systematic relationship. The ideational meanings that we find in texts correspond quite reliable to the *field* of the register of the text, the interpersonal meanings correspond well to the *tenor* of the text, and the textual meanings correspond with the *mode* of the text. This is one of the reasons why, given a text, we can say a lot about the kind of situations that that text can appropriately occur and, conversely, given a situation, we can already say quite a lot about the kinds of language that occur there.

The ability to read meaning into linguistic patterns reliably and across all instances of language use is of paramount importance in taking linguistic interpretation beyond what can be achieved by non-linguistic interpretation. Some consequences of this are drawn in the following somewhat provocative statement by one of the main figures in the development of **functional** linguistics, Michael Halliday:

"A discourse analysis that is not based on grammar is not an analysis at all, but simply a running commentary on a text: either an appeal has to be made to some set of non-linguistic conventions, or to some linguistic features that are trivial enough to be accessible without a grammar...; or else the exercise remains a private one in which one explanation is as good or as bad as another." (Halliday, 1994:xvi-xvii)

That language manages to express so many distinct kinds of meaning simultaneously is itself worth considering more closely. It is not straightforward to collect separate meanings together in a single sound sequence in a way that a hearer or reader can reliably recover them. An analogy might be the following. Consider trying to inform a correspondent which three colours you had selected (for some obscure reason such as these were the three colours that you had decided to paint the kitchen). Take the three colours, mix them together, paint the result on a piece of paper and send this to the poor correspondent. Can the receiver of the letter now unambiguously recover the three colours

Function and form: the role of structure

the kitchen is to be painted? Probably not. The information of the individuality of the three colours has been lost; mixing them together in this way is not an effective way of functionally transmitting the information. So language clearly does not in general mix meanings in this way. Something else must be going on.

The ability of language to mix meanings in a way that leaves them recoverable for the hearer or reader is in large part due to another vital property of language: the fact that language employs a range of different kinds of structures. These linguistic structures carry the weight of combining diverse meanings in such a way that a reader/hearer can re-extract them. Without structure, adding diverse meanings would be just like mixing together our different colour paints until we are left with a muddy brown; with structure, we have a richly organised piece of linguistic information which carries its messages with great robustness and reliability. The distinct colours are combined, but in a way that maintained their separate contributions. This is one of the reasons why structure is so important to an understanding of how language works-and so we will return to structure in much more detail later in the course. However, the trick, always, is not to sever the very necessary link between these complex structures and the kinds of meanings that we see in the metafunctions. Structure (i.e., form) is there both so that the meanings (i.e., function) remain recoverable and so that those meanings can themselves become as complex as human cultures require. Without structure, complex meanings are not possible and below we will see why.

Finally, before we think that we have mapped out all the possibilities, that we 'only' need a detailed grammatical analysis in our toolkit and that will get the job done, let us glance at one final text and raise some questions concerning it: particularly questions about where its significant meanings are 'hiding'. This text belongs to a completely different genre to those we have seen so far in this chapter: it is a poem by the Scottish poet Tom Leonard, and it concerns the role and function of language.

> ah knew a linguist wance wance ah knew a linguist

shi used tay git oanty mi ah wish I could talk like you ahv lost my accent

thi crux iz says ah shiftin ma register tay speak tay a linguist

Opening up territory would you swear tay swerr and no abjure the extra-semantic kinetics uv thi fuckin poor ach mobile society mobile ma arse

(Tom Leonard, from "Ghostie Men" in Intimate Voices, 1984)

Here we have significant choices—and this entails meaningful choices—being made of very different kinds. The poem has to be read with a particular systematic set of sound choices—the phonetic and phonological system of English as spoken in Glasgow, this is communicated additionally through the deliberate choice of a 'non-standard' (exactly what this might mean we return to in Chapter 8 below) way of spelling, or **orthography**, the grammatical patterns and the lexical selections—the words—are also carrying a range of meanings at differing levels as always. We have aspects of reported dialogue, we have repetition creating addition layers of patterns.

All of these meaning communicating choices need to be identified and related in order to understand how the language manages to support the effects and interpretations that it does. Our linguistic toolkit thus needs to be particularly flexible and offer a wide range of instruments. We also need to have a good grasp of the different kinds of phenomena that we are going to apply those tools to. To shift metaphors slightly, we need a far more precise 'map' of the linguistic territory. And it is to this that we turn in the next chapter.

#### Reading and references

The framework used for thinking about the situations of use of texts was set out in an early form in:

Halliday, M.A.K., McIntosh, A. and Strevens, P. (1964) *The linguistic* sciences and language teaching, London : Longman.

The discussions of the kinds of language found in police reports and the use of linguistics to decide whether a report was really produced by the accused or not belongs to the area of *forensic linguistics*. The examples used here were taken from:

- Asp, E. (2000). Legal Victims. In Discourse and Community: Doing functional linguistics (E. Ventola, Hrsg.) (S. 29-46). Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Gregory, M. (2000). Doing forensic linguistics: endangered people in the community. In *Discourse and Community: Doing functional linguistics* (E. Ventola, Hrsg.) (S., 19-28). Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.

The translations of biographies and their comparisons were taken from:

Purser, E. & Paul, L. (1999). *Translation: übersetzung*. Berlin : Cornelsen.

where these issues are discussed in more detail.

The radio interview discussion is drawn mostly from:

Hodge, R. & Kress, G. (1988) *Social Semiotics*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press. (Chapter 5: 'Social definitions of the real')

which provides an introduction to many aspects of the social interpretation of language.

The introduction to news reports, events, and packaging events in clauses is taken from:

Delin, Judy (2000) Language and Everyday Life. Sage Publishers.

The Quarry Load-Shedding and Major Keeble newspaper article discussions are drawn from:

Fairclough, Norman (1989). *Language and power*. London : Longman.

The introduction to dialogue and Mood is taken from:

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English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University. Chapters 4 and 5.

And some thought-provoking and entertaining examples of the use and abuse of language are given in:

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### 4 Maps, models and theories: the role of linguistic theory

WHAT WE ARE DOING THIS CHAPTER.

We have introduced a range of quite useful and powerful linguistic constructs that already allow quite detailed interpretations of some of language's meaningful patterns. But we have yet to achieve a more systematic overview of these constructs. In this chapter, we consider ways that this can be achieved, as well as some important issues in building linguistic accounts more generally: what are they to achieve and how can they do this most effectively?

#### 4.1 The rise of the 'scientific' view of linguistics

The kinds of structures used in linguistic theory today are the result of a long process of historical development and intensive study of language. Throughout the past 2000 years there have been times where clear movements have been made towards the kinds of views of language that we have today—but this has not represented steady and cumulative 'progress': insights reached have often been followed by longer periods where they have been either forgotten or rejected. There have been several landmark events in the progress linguistics has made from its early beginnings to the present day. Different authors attach differing degrees of importance to events and so there is no single definitive list of 'breakthroughs'. There is, however, a fairly standard view of the development of modern linguistics since around the turn of the 19th. century; some narratives here place more importance on individuals, others stress more the general trends of which the individuals were more representative. We will leave these finer points of interpretation somewhat in the background; we will pick out some of the generally described significant events and individuals but the reader should always bear in mind that work rarely occurs in a vacuum and there would have been a supporting cultural context that made the individual contributions possible.

In 1786, Sir William Jones presented a paper at the Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta where he argued convincingly that Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and the Germanic languages all have a common root, or ancestor. As he wrote (and as is quoted in most introductions to the history of linguistics):

"The Sanskrit language, whatever be its Antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists."

This result was, if itself not solely responsible for, then at least strongly indicative of a state of knowledge or awareness being reached at that time, that it was now both desirable and possible, using systematic studies of grammar (mostly morphology) and sounds (although mostly taken from written records), to reveal close family relationships between languages that had through historical development diverged to the point where they are not mutually intelligible to any degree—and sometimes could not even be recognisable as related at all without considerable close investigation. Work at this time was not solely concerned with language. James's talk referred to language as just one aspect of a broader comparison and discussion of the literatures, mythologies, appearance, and cultural contexts of the peoples discussed. This had many precursors in the previous century and the question of origins was one that had occupied many for a considerable time—originally on Religious grounds, looking for the original language that Adam spoke, and then increasingly on ideological nationalistic grounds, as emerging nations sought to show that that their language was each the earliest (cf. Eco's *In search of the perfect language*).

The shift that can be seen in James's discussion was that there was a growing realisation and acceptance of the role of systematic studies of fine details of the languages investigated. Correspondences between languages could only be constructed by such study. This then was the beginning of a widespread investigation into the commonalities between languages and the search for possible processes of change that could explain them. This area, historical, comparative linguistics, became then definitive for the field of linguistics as a whole. This led to a host of discoveries and hypotheses about language change, some of which we will return to later when we take up the subject of language variation in more detail.

These earliest results were, however, in one respect flawed—they remained observations that sometimes fitted the facts, and sometimes did not. When they did not, the 'exception' was found to be unproblematic, and was accepted because, after all, language is a complicated thing. This is usually illustrated by the following wellknown historical example.

After a series of significant studies that gradually widened the range of languages that had been established as 'related' in some sense both to and to the earlier language that William Jones had each other hypothesised, the German linguist Jakob Grimm published a lengthy work around 1820 that demonstrated that the changes in sounds that had occurred across the related languages were overwhelmingly systematic. This result was known as Grimm's Law-or, more first technically. the Germanic Consonant Shift. or erste Lautverschiebung, reflecting the general fact mentioned above that Grimm's observations depended on some other crucial contributions and were also refined subsequently (we return to this entire effort and its crucial role in the formation of a discipline of linguistics in Chapter 11). Grimm's Law described how all the Germanic languages could be viewed as being derived from "some common source" (now called

Proto Indo-European) and as systematically differing from, for example, the Romance languages if it were assumed that some of the original sounds of Proto Indo-European has undergone a widespread and systematic change in the Germanic languages which had not occurred in the Romance languages.

These systematic sound changes are summarised for English in the table below. The sounds of the upper line represent the hypothesised sound of the hypothesised original language (hypothesised because, as James said, this original language is indeed not found anymore) and the sounds of the lower line show their corresponding versions in English (a Germanic language) following the sound shift; similar tables can be prepared for German, Dutch, etc.



The ability to set up such an extensive set of *regular* sound shifts is very significant. It meant that connections could be investigated between languages much more broadly than before: that is, on a 'system'-basis rather than on individual collections of words.

Different sound shifts can be constructed for the Romance languages, but involving other linguistic elements. In the Romance languages, the particular sounds considered in Grimm's Law appeared not to have changed substantially. That is, where a Germanic language will have an /f/, the 'corresponding' word in a Romance language will generally have a /p/, and so on.

The fact that we have a common source developing in two different directions then gives rise to widespread divergences such as those shown below.



The shift as a whole convinces primarily by virtue of its regularity. Very large numbers of correspondences can be constructed in this way—very many more than could be considered reasonably to arise by chance. This established clearly the two broad groups of languages the Germanic and the Romance—and made it almost certain that they indeed could be seen as deriving from a single historical antecedent. This shows the beginning of an extensive methodology that has now resulted in the very detailed statements of relationships between languages that we nowadays mostly take for granted but whose development we will see in more detail in Chapter 11.

Now, while this systematicity was striking, it did not hold in absolutely every case (consider: for example, modern German "drei" for "three" where we have a /d/ instead of the /T/, i.e., a sound like that at the beginning of 'three', predicted by the sound shift). As a consequence of this and many other cases, Grimm wrote: "The sound shift is a general tendency; it is not followed in every case."

This attitude was subsequently severely challenged by the so-called *Junggrammatiker*, or, Neogrammarians (represented primarily by H. Osthoff and K. Brugmann from Leipzig) with some important papers from around 1878. The Neogrammarians said that it was not sufficient for a real exploration of language for 'laws' to apply when convenient. They argued for a more thoroughgoing adoption of the methods of the physical sciences: if a 'law of language change' were to be proposed, then it should always apply—like the 'law of gravity'. This leads to the central position of 'exceptionless sound laws'.

If the facts appear to speak against a sound change law, then either the law must go, or it must be refined, extended, or replaced. A rational explanation should in any case be sought to explain why the apparent exception had occurred. Although there was at the time much debate
concerning these proposals, they soon began to show their worth: apparent exceptions to previous 'laws' were often shown to be quite predictable when examined in more detail. In an extremely influential and well constructed paper from 1875, the Danish linguistic Verner established that a large set of the sound shifts previously seen as exceptions to Grimm's Law were in fact themselves perfectly systematic and did not in fact represent exceptions at all: they were caused by different properties of the originating Proto Indo-European forms that had previously been overlooked. Thus it was gradually accepted that language (and particularly language change) could and should be studied in this way.<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned above, we will see some of this argument in more detail when we deal explicitly with language variation in Chapter 11; we will also see one of the areas where the approach was contested most strongly, that of dialect description, in Chapter 8. But for the present, we will turn away from the story of this development and consider it simply as the backdrop for the move into the twentieth century and the increasingly 'scientific' view of language and language study adopted. The value of approaching language change systematically and of the methodological decision that apparent exceptions to laws demanded not acceptance but further study in order to formulate a revised and more accurate law was incontrovertible.

This position was accepted and taken considerably further by Ferdinand de Saussure, who is often regarded as the 'father' of modern linguistics—although as probably the case with most parents, there have been both positive and negative influences on subsequent development! A few years before his death, de Sausure was asked by his university in Geneva to hold some of the courses on general linguistics; up to that time, coming as we have seen out of the tradition of comparative historical linguistics, such an introduction would have been primarily, if not exclusively, historical. Saussure, however, gradually introduced some dramatically new elements, elements which arose out of his profound dissatisfaction with the state of historical comparative linguistics at that time. He was, however, very diffident concerning his new directions and did not publish his new lines of thought.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Seurens (1999) suggests that the role attributed to the Neogrammarians is often overrated and that the move to a more scientific mode of discourse was in any case bound to happen over that period. And Lass (1997, p133) draws attention to some efforts in a similar direction from the century before Verner. But, regardless of these details, the Neogrammarians provide a convenient point of crystallisation in that they clearly and loudly stated what was wrong and made suggestions about what to do about it.

Then, in 1916, following de Saussure's death, two colleagues published with the help of a student who has attended Saussure's courses an edited version of course notes collected from his students. This was the Cours de linguistique générale, a book often cited as heralding the beginning of modern linguistics. This very important book introduced several concepts that are still crucial in linguistic study. First, de Saussure distinguished between diachronic and synchronic linguistics. The former is the study of language change over time, historical linguistics, and the latter is the study of a language as it is at any particular moment in its history. This dichotomy was important in that it made it clear that linguistics did not have to be comparative and historical: this was a point that needed making since in the nineteenth century, as we have seen, such studies were central. Second, de Saussure distinguished between two aspects of language: parole and langue. These two terms have established themselves and remain technical terms within linguistics generally.

Parole is the language that people actually speak or write, the language that comes out of their mouths with all the possible mistakes, hesitations, changes of mind, restarts and so on that characterise natural language as it is spoken. De Saussure argued that it was not useful for linguistics to study this phenomenon since it was largely determined by a great many factors that have, in fact, very little to do with language for example, whether one was distracted by something at the moment of speaking, or whether one happens to have one's mouth full of icecream, or if one changes one's mind about what one wanted to say. De Saussure suggested that the true and proper object of study for linguistics should not be this ragbag of acoustic events but rather the system of language underlying any such events. That is, linguistics should concern itself with the language produced by 'idealised' speakers: how speakers would speak (and write) if they were not subject to any distraction, did not change their mind midway through a sentence, had limitless memory and breath, etc. This, de Saussure was sure, was essential in order to really get at what is significant about language, the central object of study for linguistics.

This underlying system of language, unaffected by the vagaries of production, he termed *langue*, and de Saussure saw this as *a system of interrelated elements*. Thus language was not to be something that could be described as some set of unrelated elements, or by lists of unrelated phenomena; for de Saussure, and most linguists after him, language is instead made to work by structurally relating elements of various kinds: and it is the *structure of the interrelationships* not the elements that are significant. Analogies given by de Saussure include a railway system—where it is not the unique identity of the particular

train carriages that is significant, what makes the thing work is the relations between places defined by the tracks and the fact that trains go between them with some (greater or lesser) regularity—and the game of chess, where the pieces themselves are not what makes the game interesting, instead it is the configurations of pieces that occur during the playing of a game, how the pieces are related to one another. Nowadays language is most commonly looked at in this way. Linguists (i.e., people looking at language linguistically) attempt to uncover the configurations of linguistic elements that make language work in the ways that it does, and of which we have seen a few simple examples in the previous chapters.

These dichotomies<sup>4</sup> provided a foundation for linguistics in the twentieth century. Linguistics came to examine most centrally the systems of languages found at some particular time in their history: it could set out about examining languages and trying to reveal their 'underlying' organisations in as much detail as required. The accounts offered then had to stand on their own empirical merits just as the laws of the physical sciences. They needed to provide a firm foundation for statements about all aspects of linguistic behaviour. Linguistic research therefore came to be characterised by the general style of investigation also undertaken in scientific empirical studies: and it is this that motivates descriptions of linguistics as an 'empirical science'.

4.2 The empirical cycle

The scientific style of investigation can be seen as a cycle, or spiral, consisting of observations of data, increasingly systematic descriptions of these observations, the proposal of explicit theories that seek to explain the observations and, finally, following up predictions concerning empirical observations that follow from the theories proposed. When the predictions are borne out by observation, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> De Saussure also introduced another notion that is also often cited whenever his work is introduced; and that is the '*arbitrariness*' of the linguistic sign. Since this is one of the bits of parental baggage that has, in many respects, caused rather more trouble, it will not be particularly stressed here. Saussure was concerned, as with almost all attempts to do linguistics at that time, only with very 'small' linguistic signs. Such signs—such as the word for dog in German or French (or English)—may well be 'arbitrary', i.e., one language has "Hund", another "chien". But, as we have seen above, the *configurations* of linguistic choices that are revealed when we do, for example, a transitivity analysis of the Processes, Participants, and Circumstances of an entire text are virtually *never* arbitrary; they are generally highly meaningful and relate naturally to configurations of semantic, stylistic and ideological import. If they were arbitrary, then they would not be able to carry meaning and it would be fairly pointless studying them! Thus arbitrariness should not be extended beyond the scope of small signs such as words, morphemes, phonemes and the like.

theory used is supported; when, however, the predictions are not borne out, then the theory is falsified, and a revised and more accurate theory needs to be worked out that includes the new observations. This cycle is illustrated graphically below. This view of linguistics has been very successful. It has resulted in more detailed linguistic accounts than ever before achieved in the study of language



The most important consequence of the application of this scientific methodology is the development of explicit linguistic theories. These theories can be used for a variety of purposes. For example, they can be used to describe linguistic observations more systematically and concisely: when a theory motivates particular descriptions, much of the apparent randomness of empirical observations can be reduced and particular observations are shown instead to follow from general principles. Moreover, a theory can be used to predict linguistic observations that have not yet been made: i.e., the theory can be used to predict how language is used or structured. And, finally, a theory can be used to explain why the linguistic observations are as they are. Explanations can be drawn from a range of domains: they can either be internal to the phenomena being described—i.e., particular language structures may occur because only these structures result in a coherent, contradiction-free system capable of serving as a means of communicating meaning-or external, where explanation is found in, typically, social organisations and psychological organisations. For example, general linguistic patters may be explained by saying that these structures are required to express particular social structures—or by saying that these structures are necessary because that is the way the human brain works.

We can give examples of these different uses of theory with respect to our analyses in terms of Processes, Participants and Circumstances. A simple description might be that clauses appear to have these three kinds of functional constituents: when we look at texts and their sentences, we see these patterns. This is a systematisation of our observations of linguistic data.



But we can go further. When we look at a wider range of sentences and texts, we keep seeing these on patterns being employed. Eventually might we build these into a theory of sentences which preallows for diction: one prediction might be

that *all* sentences contain Processes, Participants and Circumstances. This is then not just an observation that may or may not apply to the next sentence that we look at, it is a *claim* that the theory makes. If we then find a sentence where this is not true, then the theory is falsified and we are forced to look at the facts—i.e., the set of observations more closely in order to see if we can come up with a better theory. Finally, we can take the step of building into our theory notions of **explanation**.

Two possible explanations for our prediction that all clauses consist of Processes, Participants and Circumstances might be: (i) clauses have the particular function of expressing events (or 'eventualities' as they are sometimes called in more technical discourse) introduced above, or (ii) the structure of our brains requires clauses to be structured in this way. The first explanation is a kind of internal linguistic *functional* explanation; the second is a kind of external *cognitive psychological* explanation. These two forms of explanation could also be combined.

GRAMMAR is the Art of rightly expressing our thoughts by Words.

Grammar in general, or Univerfal Grammar, explains the Principles which are common to all languages.

The Grammar of any particular Language, as the English Grammar, applies those common principles to that particular language, according to the established usage and custom of it. Linguists who construct linguistic models in the scientific mode will then often try to find examples of linguistic behaviour that either support or falsify their theories. By these means, theories are further refined and become able to cover an increasingly wide range of linguistic phenomena with ever fewer exceptions.

It is worth noting here that there is one kind of use of observation that is *not* linguistic: and that is the development of grammars, etc. that attempt not to describe and explain how language is, but rather to tell people how language should be used. Grammars are often seen in this light, although there are also similar works concerning style, rhetoric, etc. This was one of the first motivations for grammars being written at all (cf. Thrax's grammar of Greek from the first century B.C. mentioned again in Chapter 5) and continued together and entwined with grammatical description until modern times. Thus we see, in the extract shown left taken from the very influential Grammar of English from 1762 by Richard Lowth, a mixture of statements that could belong to a modern linguistic account—particularly those parts concerning the role and relation of 'universal grammar'—and state-ments that could not—in particular those concerning 'rightly expressing' our thoughts. And as Lowth continues:

"The principal design of a Grammar of any Language is to teach us to express ourselves with propriety in that Language, and to be able to judge of every phrase and form of construction, whether it be right or not."

Here again we find the seeds of what would become generative grammar in the late 1950s and early 1960s: the view of grammar as a source of 'judgement' concerning grammatical constructions, but altered completely in flavour by the relation to 'propriety'. A modern generative grammar will judge whether a sentence is grammatical or not, it will not judge this as being appropriate or stylistically correct.

The difference between *description*, which is linguistic, and *pre*- or proscription, which is not, is an important one to grasp because otherwise it is easy to misjudge what a linguistic grammar or any other linguistic model is attempting to achieve. We have two modes:

- description: describing how language is, systematising our observations in order to serve as a basis for proposing theories. Empirical.
- prescription/proscription: saying how language should or should not be, based on norms and social standards, sense(s) of aesthetics, 'folk'-feelings about language.

Linguistic descriptions are not prescriptive, they attempt to describe language as it occurs; the facts that language is spoken differently by different groups, differently by adults and children, and that language use can change both according to geography and to age are all observations to be described and worked into theories—they are not to be evaluated or judged as inadequate, wrong, ugly, or whatever (although we may develop theories to explain *why* they may be judged in some particular way: this is an interesting component of *sociolinguistics* and relates language use to social class, social groups, and language attitudes and awareness).

The empirical cycle as we have now seen it is also the basis underlying most linguistics texts: that is, pieces of linguistic work when written up generally have to show how they have taken a circuit or two from data, to description, to theory, to hypothesis and back to data. We will see this again when we examine text structure. Any 'empirical' piece of linguistic writing needs to show this particular kind of structure if it is to be recognisable as linguistics.

## 4.3 Theories as maps of the territory

The scientific methodology is a useful one, but it should not (and cannot) be seen as a 'shortcut to the truth'! Even within a broadly scientific orientation, there are still many ways in which the scientific method can be put into action. The theories proposed follow largely from the questions that are asked; when researchers are interested in particular aspects of language, that is where the theories are developed. If the researchers are interested in the relation between language and society, then these will be the kind of explanations worked into their theories and proposals for explanations; if a researcher is interested instead in language as a formal system, then this type of explanation will be proposed.

It is important to see the role of theories, and the explanations that they offer, as tools for answering particular questions given particular starting assumptions. There may be different theories depending on the questions. As is more often nowadays suggested, this is precisely analogous to various kinds of maps: a linguistic theory can be looked at very well as an attempt to draw an accurate map of the linguistic territory being examined. And, just as with theories, the kinds of map drawn depend on the purposes assumed for the map user.



To make this clear, consider the (extract from a) map on the left. This particular kind of map has a very particular kind of function: this means that it will only answer certain kinds of questions, but those questions it will answer more effectively than many other kinds of maps. For example, it will tell us to go from

Paddington station to Swiss Cottage on the London Underground very effectively: but it will not tell us exactly how far Paddington is from Swiss Cottage. If we measured the distance and decided it would be

quicker to walk, or take a taxi, because then we would cut off the corner at Baker Street, then this could well turn out to be a sad mistake. This is because the layout of the underground map has been designed so as to represent the distinct underground lines and points of connection effectively; distances between stations and even exact geographical location (especially of stations on different lines) are not something that has been preserved. As Widdowson, in his introduction to linguistics, puts it, such a map

"bears very little resemblance to the actual layout of the track the trains run on, the twists and turns it takes as it threads its way underground. It gives no indication either about the distances between stations. It is even more remote from the reality of London above ground with its parks and public buildings and intricate network of streets. Such a map would be quite useless for finding your way on foot. It is in effect a model of the underground transport system designed as a guide to the traveller using it, and it leaves out everything which is not relevant to that purpose." (Widdowson, 1996:19)

We can take this further in the following two diagrams of the 'same' thing (taken from Karl-Heinz Wagner's introduction to phonetics course). These are diagrams that might be used for explaining something of how the sounds of language are produced.



The diagram on the left shows an anatomically accurate picture of the parts of the body that are involved: primarily the lungs (and diaphragm: the muscle below the lungs) and the complicated parts of the throat and mouth. This 'map' would be useful for the medical student, or the linguist who wants to know exactly where in the body the relevant parts are. The diagram on the right shows the same thing but with a

very different intention. Here the purpose is to show those *functional* components that contribute to the making of sounds. The diagram shows just those components that are required, and abstracts away from the exact shape and placement of these in the anatomically-correct diagram (i.e., by showing everything as simplified rectangular shapes) since the exact shape is not significant for sound production (apart from the position and shape of the tongue relative to the roof of the mouth: which is why it is shown in a rather different form).

If you did not previously know what the role of the 'diaphragm' (Zwerchfell) in speech production was, then the diagram on the left would probably not help you. But the diagram on the right might well give you a good idea—it is the 'pump' at the bottom that reduces or increases the volume of air in the lungs. The diagram shows that sounds are essentially produced by pumping air through the extended pipe formed by the connected components.

Linguistic theories and models are similar to these diagrams in many respects: they reveal certain aspects of the phenomena being studied the territory of linguistic patterning—at the cost of hiding others. This cost is considered more than worthwhile because a good model, like a good map, can reveal many things that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to see among the clutter of differing scales and irrelevant details.

Models may also be 'static', like the diagram on the left, or more or less 'active', like the diagram on the right. The diagram on the right could actually be used to build a physical model of the human speech production system, one that pumps air in at one end and produces sounds at the other. And this has in fact been done and used as a test of the model: if it were not possible to produce sounds similar to human speech with such a model then it would be likely that something was in fact not correct. This is not to say that the human speech sound production system is identical in all its details to the map shown in the figure on the right; merely that it shares some important **functional correspondences**. Thus one way of testing such an 'active' model of a linguistic phenomenon is to 'plug it in' and see if it goes.

This is the *predictive* aspect of models described above: the model predicts that when certain conditions are set—e.g., that the model's mouth is a certain size, when the tongue is in a certain position, when the lips are open, etc.—then particular sounds should be produced. If the sounds produced by a person are examined under the 'same' set of conditions and those sounds are different to that produced (i.e., predicted by the model), then we know that the model is not yet

accurate enough. The model has been *empirically* investigated and *falsified*.

We will see later that there are various ways of building 'active' models in linguistics and that it is not always necessary (or even usual) to build an actual physical object that the model defines. If we can specify sufficiently exactly how the various components of a model are to interact, and what they are to do, then we can generally simulate what the model is describing. Most modern linguistic theories operate in this sense: they provide a simulation of some aspect of linguistic behaviour that is being investigated. So this is more a simulation in the sense of, for example, a flight simulator computer programme, which may have various pieces of information about the landscape and airports, but also some mathematical rules concerning which way the plane will go given particular settings of its controls, wind direction, altitude, etc. These kinds of linguistic simulations can then range from the purely mathematical through to 'real' computer simulations that can, to some extent, 'understand' or 'produce' texts; these latter simulations belong to the field of computational linguistics.

Finally, we will mention here two sources of difficulties that can be faced when using linguistic models or theories. The predictions can turn out to be wrong for two reasons: first, the simplest to understand, the model may be wrong. This is the classical scientific method by which theories are proposed, falsified by experiment, and replaced. There are probably no models, beyond the area of basic phonetics, that are entirely correct: linguistics still has much to do in order to uncover the workings of language. Alternatively, a model may produce predictions or expectations that are inaccurate because the model has been proposed as a *simplification* and we have tried to use it beyond its limits. Again we can consider this analogously to the situation with maps of the territory. Maps are produced to a certain scale: if we have a large-scale roadmap of a town, the map will not yield useful predictions about, for example, the width of roads, or the exact size of gardens, or the height of walls. Some linguistic models are also produced as simplifications—for example, for the purposes of teaching some aspect of language or linguistics; we will see illustrations of this later.

The problem with this perfectly justifiable practice is that it may not be made particularly clear whether something is being claimed because it is a deliberate simplification that is made for a particular purpose or whether the claim is *intended* to be generally valid, part of a general model of language as such.

If we always bear in mind that *all* theories and models are produced to answer particular kinds of questions and to serve particular functions

then the consequences of such inaccuracies will be kept to a minimum: for each model we encounter, we can consider what questions the model addresses and for what purposes—if those match with our questions and purposes, then all to the good; if not, then we can seek a different model.

This has been summarized usefully by David Butt (1996) as follows. When we push this analogy with maps further it reveals some important and useful details of linguistic theorising that can too often be neglected or not realized:

"Maps are constructed for particularly purposes; and in accordance with each purpose maps are, of necessity, constructed through specific conventions—conventions of scale; of grid lines. All these conventions are environments of choice, points about which decisions must be made in the making of the appropriate meaning, that is, in the making of the appropriate map. Some decisions or options necessitate particular choices elsewhere (i.e., they are dependent). Others can be selected over again at each scale or rank in the map's construction." (Butt, 1996:xxxi)

And finally, a point to which we will have occasion to return:

"All the decisions we make about a metarepresentation [e.g.., a map] constitute an ideological position with respect to the description." (Butt, ibid.)

Decisions are never neutral.

## 4.4 An example: two contrasting maps for discourse interpretation

In this section, we provide a simple illustration of the points made in this chapter that we need maps of the territory in order to pose questions and evaluate answers, and that we can have differing maps of the same territory.<sup>5</sup> We build on our knowledge of interpreting aspects of texts to show two prominent maps that have been applied in the area of interpreting discourse. The first goes under the name of **Speech Act Theory**, and is generally found under the broad heading of **pragmatics**—i.e., that part of linguistics to do with how and when to use certain linguistic behaviour. The second goes under the name of **Conversation Analysis**, and is often set up as a rival approach that some are reluctant to place within linguistics at all! Both are concerned with a central concern of all linguistics however: how do we find out what meanings are to be associated with particular utterances.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Thanks to Kerstin Fischer for suggesting the particular theories that we contrast here.

Space precludes providing very much detail on either approach; and useful introductions that go into more depth are available in some of the standard introductory pragmatics text books. What we will focus on particularly here is making both models comprehensible as *alternative* maps for the territory concerned with finding meanings. We will see the basic premises that each account rests on and the means each employs for testing whether its claims are 'correct'. We will also see that it is not possible simply to 'combine' the two approaches; in certain respects their basic tenets are not compatible. They are fundamentally different kinds of maps. However, we will also see that we learn something from this: neither approach on its own can really claim to be *the* answer. Any real progress in understanding theoretically how meanings in discourse work will need to draw on the insights from both of these maps. This will be an important point to keep in mind when following up either or both of these approaches later in your studies.

## 4.4.1 Speech Act Theory (and pragmatic interpretations)

Speech act theory is a very influential approach to a particular range of problems in linguistics. It is concerned with how we can interpret sentences to get at what the speaker wanted to achieve with them. This rests on a basic distinction used in this kind of map: that between *literal* meaning and *intended* meaning.

Speech act theory was first set out in the classic text by the philosopher of language John Austin called *How to do things with words* from 1962. Austin draw attention to the fact that certain utterances appeared to do considerably more than just report some state of affairs in the world, they actually change those states of affairs in some way. The simplest examples of this are expressions such as:

- I pronounce you man and wife.
- I christen this ship the Titanic.
- I arrest you in the name of the law.
- I bet you 10 Euros that it will rain tomorrow.

When said by a speaker invested with the proper authority, each of these utterances leaves the world in a different state to how it was before; in the first case, the people involved are married, in the second, the ship receives a name, in the third, someone has been caught up in a very complicated area of discourse indeed—the discourse of legal action, and in the fourth, the speaker and hearer have committed themselves to an exchange of funds depending on future weather conditions.

Austin called these kinds of utterances performatives, since they appear to actually perform some action. If we think about the kinds of meanings we saw in the previous chapter, there appears to be something extra happening here. Austin argued that such performatives were *doing* something rather than simply representing something, and therefore could not be considered as true or false (the usual kind of statement that logicians would make about statements of fact) but rather could only be described as **felicitous** or **infelicitous**. If, for example, the sentence 'I pronounce you man and wife' were uttered by someone selling drinks in a bar, or by a salesperson in a shop, then the speech act would not have as a consequence that a marriage has occurred: that is, the speech act is *infelicitous* and so does not perform. Austin sets out what he terms *felicity conditions* that have to be met in order for a performative speech act to successfully have its intended effect. These can naturally get quite complicated when they attempt to pin down precisely just when a speech act is going to perform as intended and when not.

The notion of speech acts, which are particular linguistic utterances that effect the world, makes up in this view the particular details of the linguistic map in question. If we have a map about geographical details, then there are certain details that we would use to compose the map: rivers, mountains, forests and so on. For Austin, and those who followed him in this area, the details of the map are made up of performative speech acts and the various kinds of felicity conditions that need to hold for them to be effective. The map is one that has several desirable features in that it explains that certain kinds of linguistic objects will have very special effects. These effects could not be read off other maps that were available at that time.

If one has a good map, or rather as in this case, a good system of cartography that promises to let you make good maps, then there is a natural tendency to apply it as much as possible. Austin develops an argument whereby his map is seen as applying to *all* utterances, not just those obviously special ones listed above. This was certainly aided by the fact that it is actually quite difficult to identify *linguistically* just what utterances are 'performatives' and which not. Several 'tests' were suggested, but it is certainly not simple. For example, why is

I bet you 10 Euros it'll rain tomorrow

a performative and

Yesterday I bet you 10 Euros that it'd rain tomorrow

not? Or, if one says:

I'll be there tomorrow without fail.

or even just:

See you tomorrow!

why are these often just as effective as promises as the utterance:

I promise to be there tomorrow.

So rather than continue seeking some final watertight indication of just when an utterance was to be considered a performative and when not, Austin took the logical step of saying that *all* utterances have both a meaning and a **force** and that the performatives were simply examples where their performative force was being made particularly clear.

Thus, for Austin, all utterances were to be considered simultaneously as three kinds of act:

• the **locutionary** act: the utterance itself and its direct meaning

• the **illocutionary** act: the particular force that the utterance has as making a statement, of offering, ordering, promising, etc.

• the **perlocutionary** act: the particular effects of an utterance on an audience depending on the particulars of the speech situation and that audience.

This is then is then a still further refined map of the linguistic territory. For each utterance examined we can seek to fit it into the categories provided by the map. There have been some quite influential extensions of the map: for example, Searle (1969, 1975) set out the beginnings of what has since become quite a complex taxonomy of the various kinds of 'performatives' that can be carried out.

Where this becomes particularly relevant for us is in the next step, the use of the map to explain particular details of linguistic behaviour. Most straightforward views of speech acts need to face the question of how the illocutionary force, the particular force of an utterance, is found by its hearers. This is then the general problem of *interpretation* of texts as manifested on the microcosm of individual sentences. If we have some particular sentence, and we can recover its *locutionary* act—that is we know basically what it means in terms of its ideational and experiential meanings—how can a hearer recover its actual force as intended in its context of use. Speech act theory typically looks at this as a problem of how to proceed from the literal meaning of an utterance in order to find its situated interpreted meaning.

But this is quite problematic. It often appears that the literal interpretation of an utterance gives rather little information that could guide us reliably to an answer. We can see this particularly well with

areas such as 'requests'. For example, a performative of this kind could be explicitly communicated with an utterance such as:

I hereby request that you pass me the salt.

This kind of utterance is, of course, extremely rare; it appears that *most* utterances do not directly signal their illocutionary force in this way at all, which is, according to the speech act map, a little curious. Why would language users develop such a roundabout system whereby they regularly say something that is different from what they actually intend?

The situation is shown to be very difficult when we consider all of the ways of making requests. Consider the following set of possibilities:

- I hereby request you to open the window.
- Open the window.
- Please could you open the window?
- Would you mind possibly opening the window?
- Might it be possible for you to open the window a bit?
- Whew! It's really hot in here isn't it?

All are requests, but they have very different grammatical forms. Some appear to be questions, some are statements and so on. On what basis does the hearer go about interpreting these utterances as the intended request speech acts?

These are all areas central to pragmatics and there is much continuing discussion on how we can get from literal interpretations to intended performative meanings. One common approach is to make as explicit as possible the range of *clues* in the literally produced utterance that show that further interpretation is required to find what the speaker actually wanted. So, including an explicit performative verb like "promise" or "request" would be a clear clue; others, a little more subtle, would be to include words like "hereby", to use present tense, and so on.<sup>6</sup> But these only take one so far and, if we only mark on our map utterances that are recognisable in this way, would leave many, probably the vast majority, of real performatives literally off the map.

A further interpretative tool is offered by the so-called **Gricean Maxims** of cooperative interaction, named, again, after a philosopher of language (cf. Grice, 1975). The Gricean Maxims suggest particular behavioural styles that speakers apparently follow when being

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> These are called **Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices**, or IFIDs, in the pragmatics literature.

coooperative and which hearers assume speakers to be following when they try to interpret what a speaker says. The maxims are:

- the maxim of **quantity**: only say as much as is required to be informative, not more;
- the maxim of **relevance**: only say something that is relevant;
- the maxim of **quality**: only say something that is true;
- the maxim of **manner**: say things clearly, without obscurity and ambiguity.

This means that given an utterance, a hearer can inspect whether or not the literal interpretation appears to follow the maxims of cooperative linguistic behaviour. If it does, then the hearer can interpret the utterance literally; if it does not, then the speaker probably wants to communicate something more so the hearer should go looking for a further possible interpretation.

The Gricean Maxims would apply to some of our examples above as follows. In the sentence "Would you mind possibly opening the window?" there is a literal interpretation involving a question about a conditional minding of some event. This literal question is seeking information about the mental state of the hearer. But the hearer can then reason that this is not very relevant to what is going on and so must be attempting to lead him or her somewhere. Then, somehow, the hearer might reach the conclusion that perhaps a request is being made because the form "would you mind" occurs in requests quite often. Similarly, the utterance "Whew! It's really hot in here isn't it?" could similarly be seen as violating some maxim of relevance and so trigger a helpful response.

In both cases we see an essential component of this map of language use: speakers and hearers are seen as 'linguistic problem solvers' who reason rationally about what their utterances can and should mean. The map contains basic features, such as categories for particular types of speech acts and for distinctions between, at least, locutionary (literal) meaning and illocutionary meaning, as well as some set of mechanisms for saying how we can get from one to the other.

While the Gricean maxims give some kind of starting point for when to look deeper for an interpretation, they do not provide much help with just how one is to go about that. Moreover, it is clear that in many natural communicative situations, the cooperative principle is not a very good one to follow—always being so direct might be good for philosophical discussions, but would leave many natural interactions in a very unsatisfactory state with not very happy interlocutors. This is particularly relevant in the case of the requests that we saw above: here we appear to have many violations of the maxims occurring not as special cases, but rather as the normal ways of doing things. We regularly see violations of the maxims of manner since the request is, apparently, not being made in a clear and direct fashion.

This has been studied extensively from the perspective of **politeness**, for which Brown and Levinson (1987) still provide probably the most detailed account. Here the different ways of getting something done are related to various strategies for being polite, which are in turn related to different preferences for use in various cultures. This gives some motivated deviations from the simple application of the Gricean Maxims. As an example, Brown and Levinson set out the following strategies for getting someone to lend someone a pen. The alternatives are set out in a kind of 'decision tree'—i.e., at each point in the tree there is a decision to be made about which strategy to follow. The tree describes the *theoretically possible* alternatives, and is not intended to represent the reasoning steps that a speaker actually goes through when thinking about how to obtain the pen that they need.



The decision tree starts with the basic option of whether to say something at all. One could, for example, attempt to obtain a pen simply by giving graphic а performance for the need for a pen, hoping that the cooperative 'hearer' will notice this and spring to the rescue. Alternatively, if the speaker is going to goal pursue the by linguistic means. then there are still several options. One can draw attention to the fact that does one not have something that one needs without explicitly requesting any help: this

is termed an 'off record' request in that the speaker cannot be held to account afterwards for having requested a pen, they hadn't. The hearer may only have being helpful. Alternatively, the speaker can go 'on record' and actually explicitly via linguistic means request a pen: this can either be direct (probably the closest that we would come if we were following the Gricean Maxims) where the speaker baldly demands a pen or rather more indirect via a so-called 'face saving act'. The notion of **face** is one that is crucial when considering politeness and refers to the wish of speakers to maintain their status, self-image and respectability in their respective social groups.

For example, there is always the possibility that the hearer has to decline the request made of them: for example, he or she may not have a pen, or may be using the pen at that time, or might not want to give up their valuable pen, and so on. And in such a situation, if a speaker baldly demands a pen, then the answer could only be "No" or "I can't". Speakers and hearers generally take considerable pains to avoid such interactionally 'confrontational' situations and so adopt more complex politeness strategies, employing face saving techniques, that allow the potentially face threatening situations to be circumvented. These divide into two subgroups: the positive politeness techniques and the negative politeness techniques. Positive politeness techniques assume that the addressee will generally be disposed to say yes and to go along with the request, and so prepare the conversation for this. Negative politeness techniques make the opposite assumption and prepare the conversation for a painless rejection. That is, a speaker's negative politeness request "Could you open the window" prepares the ground for the addresee replying with "Oh no, sorry, I can't because I am not tall enough" or some other reason. In essence, the negative politeness strategy asks a question that checks whether the preconditions for the addressee being able to comply with the request hold. Clearly, if the preconditions do not hold for some reason (e.g., the addressee is not tall enough to reach the window), then the addressee cannot be criticised for not complying with the request and so face is saved on all sides.

One of the most interesting aspects of Brown and Levinson's study is that they provide maps of the differing preferences for politeness strategies across differing cultures. Some societies appear to favour positive politeness strategies and so would adopt these as the usual way of making a request; other societies (such as Britain) adopt negative politeness strategies and so adopt these for requests. The possibilities for intercultural misunderstandings here are, of course, extremely great. Adopting a politeness strategy that is inappropriate for a particular culture will typically be perceived not as a failed attempt to be polite, but simply as being rude. This is therefore a good example of a useful linguistic map to take with one when travelling!

## 4.4.2 Conversation Analysis

A very different kind of map of linguistic possibilities is provided by Conversation Analysis. Whereas, as we have seen, the speech act map seeks to explain how particular literal meanings are re-interpreted as intended speech acts by means of a rational subject reasoning about the things said, Conversation Analysis wishes to place the creation of meaning not in individual heads but as a result of social interaction (cf. Heritage, 1988). This can probably be made most clear with the following simple example. Consider the following extract from a dialogue:

A: Shall we go see a film tonight?

B: I've got this terrible essay to write.

We have no problems recognising B's utterance as an answer to the question raised by A's utterance. But, how do we do this linguistically? If we look at this in terms of the speech act map, we need to recognise that B's intended act is to answer the question. But there is nothing particularly linguistic in B's utterance that states 'I am answering your question', there is no linguistic clue such as the 'hereby' or an explicit performative verb such as 'I hereby answer your question'. We could say this, but it is extremely unnatural and would only be used in rather special circumstances.

Conversation Analysis takes the position that it is not necessary to work out such intended meanings on the basis of literal meanings. What we need to do instead is to consider such linguistic behaviour as what it is, a *structured interaction*. B's utterance is not then an answer to A's question because of some linguistic features that it has, but rather because it *follows a question sequentially*. In short, we have a pair of utterances—which in Conversation Analysis is termed an **adjacency pair**—in which the first one predicts the second. In a question-answer adjacency pair, a question being asked will predict that the next utterance will be an answer to that question. Similarly, in a greeting adjacency pair, a greeting will predict a greeting in reply:

A: Hello! B: Hi.

For Conversation Analysis theorists, it is this sequential positioning of turns in a conversation that provides the greatest cues concerning how a linguistic utterance is to be interpreted.

Of course, it is in general possible for a speaker to diverge from this conversational structure at any point. One might not answer a greeting, or ignore a question. The Conversation Analysis account does not say that this is impossible, but rather that *if* a speaker chooses to do this,

then it will of itself have specifiable consequences. Not answering a greeting, for example, might indicate that one speaker is not currently on friendly terms with the other. There has now been considerable work in this approach, and quite extensive sequences of 'turns' have been investigated. Natural interaction is more than sequences of questions and answers, but the basic notion of sequence plays a central role for all linguistic phenomena approached with this map.

Conversation Analysis was developed primarily by a group of sociologists interesting in linguistic interaction and its social function. sociologists were working within These the framework of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), which is essentially concerned with investigating those 'methods' that members of a culture use to create, negotiate and exchange understanding. These methods are made visible in actual dialogic interaction when we examine closely precisely what speakers say and when they say it. In contrast to the speech act view, where much happens behind the scenes in acts of private reasoning, the conversation analysis view has direct instructions for interpretation placed in the utterances and in those utterances precise placement in sequence. Ethnomethodologists were led to this viewpoint by their belief that it is not possible for hearers to calculate to the final detail what actually speakers mean with their utterances, there could always be a need for some further explanation or some further making explicit of background information. Then, since this appears not to disturb hearers at all, and both speakers and hearers interact in dialogue without constantly seeking further details, some other interpretative mechanism must be playing a role. And it is here that Conversation Analysis invokes notions of sequence and its use by speakers' methods agreement has been achieved or for achieving for showing that agreement if it has not.

This map is therefore very different from that of speech acts. It includes an essential component that was not mentioned in the speech act map at all—sequences of turns in an interaction—and does not posit basic categories such as literal meaning and intended meaning. For Conversation Analysts, meaning is arrived at in interaction; for Speech Act theorists, meaning is arrived at by calculation based on various rules of interpretation. The Speech Act map is one oriented towards reasoning and the individual; the Conversation Analysis map is one oriented towards interaction and the social. It is probably fair to say that Conversation Analysis has resulted in the most detailed and varied analyses so far achieved of fine-scale linguistic interaction.

## 4.4.3 A contrastive example of use: "indirect speech acts"

We can show the very important differences in the linguistic stories told according to the two kinds of maps considered in this section by returning to the notion of requests. As has been indicated, according to the speech act theory, we are trying to place certain linguistic behaviour onto our map by means of specifying what situational conditions must hold for a request to take place *felicitously* and what linguistic features the locutionary act must show. In contrast, according to Conversation Analysis we will be trying to place that same linguistic behaviour onto our map by means of considering particular sequences of linguistic utterances and their properties.

We have seen how there are some problems with the speech act approach in that it requires us somehow to calculate that a request is intended. Similar to the examples above, consider the following even longer set of 'ways of requesting' that someone should close the door (taken from Levinson, 1983: 264-265):

I want you to close the door. I'd be much obliged if you would close the door. Can you close the door? Are you able by any chance to close the door? Would you close the door? Won't you close the door? Would you mind closing the door? Would you be willing to close the door? You ought to close the door. It might help to close the door. Hadn't you better close the door? May I ask you to close the door? Would you mind awfully if I was to ask you to close the door? I am sorry to have to tell you to please close the door. Did you forget the door? Do us a favour with the door, love. How about a bit less breeze? Now Johnny, what do big people do when they come in? Okay, Johnny, what am I going to say next?

According to the speech act map, each of these utterances has a literal interpretation and, somehow, this is to be examined so that the intended illocutionary force of a request to carry out the action of closing the mentioned door can be recovered. This is a very varied collection.

The approach that is taken up according to the Conversation Analysis method is different. Rather than starting with the particular literal interpretations and attempting to see how these could give grounds for believing that a request has been made, the Conversation Analysis method looks at linguistic data—in their case naturally occurring dialogues—and examine those places where the speakers and hearers *themselves* understood a request to be being made. This has enabled Conversation Analysts to say a considerable amount about just when and how a request is going to be recognised.

Particularly problematic for the speech act account is the fact that most requests turn out to be 'indirect'—i.e., they do not directly request but use some other utterance (such as 'Could you close the door?'). Levinson suggests that this can be treated by employing the Conversation Analysis notion of sequencing as well as follows.

In addition to the simple adjacency pair organisation mentioned above, Conversation Analysis has also revealed more extended sequences in natural dialogues. Particularly relevant here are sequences that *prepare* the dialogue participants for some 'upcoming' kind of interactive event. For example, it is unusual, at least in British English, to just suddenly end a telephone call: speakers tend to expend energy in making sure that the call is indeed over and that both participants are ready to put the phone down. This is achieved by a preparatory sequence of turns that repeatedly give opportunities for the other to say something new. When nothing comes, the speakers move on to the next stage and actually say good bye. The 'good bye' pair is called a **Closing** and the sequence leading up to this is a **Pre-Closing**.

A variety of these so-called *pre-sequences* have been studied and each have their own distinctive set of properties. Here we focus on **pre-requests**: that is, sequences of turns that are typically found leading up to the making of a request. These draw on some general properties that hold for all pre-sequences—first, that the speakers and hearers are aware of where the sequence is heading, and second, that the distinct paths that an interaction can take can be valued differently by the participants, some paths, or 'trajectories' are preferred, while some are dispreferred. Speakers will take considerable pains to avoid following a dispreferred trajectory. Refusing a request is a strongly dispreferred conversational situation and so all interactants take steps to stop the situation arising; this is similar to the description of politeness given above.

Pre-requests can be seen as a complex interactional structure involving four slots, as illustrated in the following dialogue fragment:

PRE-REQUEST	А	Hi. Do you have uh size C flashlight batteries?
GO AHEAD	В	Yes sir.

REQUEST	А	I'll have four please.
RESPONSE	В	[turns to get them]

Typically the question that is brought in the first slot, the pre-request proper, addresses just the conditions that concretely might hold in the situation and which would stop the request being fulfilled.

"What is checked in the pre-request is what is most likely to be the grounds for refusal; and if those grounds are present, then the request sequence is aborted." (Levinson, 1983: 358)

Then, since both speakers are aware of where the pre-request is headed it can be 'short circuited', both positively and negatively. That is, the cooperative interlocutor can move the action that would have occurred in the fourth slot (the response proper) forward to occur in the second slot. This is, in fact, the most preferred way of managing the interaction. The second most preferred is to move an explicit offer into the second slot (i.e., 'Do you have Cheddar cheese?' : 'Yes, would you like some?'). And the least preferred is the full form spelled out above.

- most preferred:
  - Position 1: pre-request
  - Position 4: response to nonovert request
- next preferred:
  - Position 1: pre-request
  - Position 2': offer
  - Position 3: acceptance of offer
- least preferred:
  - Position 1: pre-request
  - Position 2: go ahead
  - Position 3: request
  - Position 4: compliance

# 4.4.4 Summary and conclusion

Maps are different, are ideological, carve up territories differently, and sometimes need to be combined. As Levinson notes:

"Finally we should note that sequencing constraints in conversation could in any case never be captured fully in speech act terms. What makes some utterance after a question constitute an answer is not only the nature of the utterance itself but also the fact that it occurs after a question with a particular content—'answerhood' is a complex property composed to sequential location and topical coherence across two utterances, amongst other things; significantly, there is no proposed illocutionary force of answering." (Levinson, 1983: 293)

Thus, whereas the speech act analysis requires decoding of actual meaning from literal meaning; the Conversation Analysis approach just needs to recognise functional slots in a turn-sequence. And this latter is often helped explicitly by speakers who apparently design their pre-requests precisely to get their addressee's desired compliance with the unstated request in the second slot. This is a very different perspective in that it does not require that the pre-request has some particular literal force that can then be analysed/interpreted further: part of its meaning *is already* that it functions as a pre-request.

We can relate this back to the kinds of meaning discussed in Chapter 3. There we saw that not all grammatical patterns serve to *represent* some state of affairs. Particularly the interpersonal grammatical patterns did not represent, they *enacted*. That is, if the order of the Subject and the Finite element was appropriate for a question, the clause did not then 'represent' a question, it *was* a question. We see a similar foregrounding in our map here: the Conversation Analysis method requires that we view our data from the perspective of action and interaction rather than from that of representation. And, certainly, when examining natural dialogues and conversations as our linguistic data to be explained, to do anything else would be guaranteed to leave much that is crucial out of the picture.

#### 4.5 The tricky question of 'data'

We have now seen that the doing of linguistics should be seen as an *empirical* activity. This means, as we discussed above with respect to the empirical cycle, that we must always have access to some 'data' with respect to which theories and models are to be constructed and then tested. But what are appropriate 'data'? The question is by no means as simple to answer as one might think—after all, since we are analysing language is not the data that one should take just that, i.e., 'language'?

It turns out that the view of what should be treated as the data for empirical investigation has gone through several very different stages in the development of linguistics. This clearly demonstrates that the question of which data to take is not one which can be answered independently of other considerations. Language is a sufficiently complex and pervasive phenomenon that it is not simply waiting there to be 'measured'—what we allow as input to the empirical cycle of building and testing linguistic theories is itself influenced by the kinds of theories and models that we are interested in building.

Consider the simple example of mapping out the contours of a mountain. If our map is to have contours every 25 metres then we do not measure the heights of individual blades of grass since this information is by and large irrelevant to our goal. This collection of height measurements might well be 'data' for some question, but not for our mountain mapping task. This example also serves to indicate that it the question of data is not reducible to a simple 'as much and as detailed as possible' since this could lead to a consideration of a mass of irrelevant information. The difficulty with dealing with language is that the decision as to what is and what is not 'relevant' is not clear-cut: opinions, both individually and historically, have varied and still vary concerning where best to draw the line between what is relevant and what is needless detail or, in the terms of information theory, what is just noise. As we have just seen with our illustrative discussion of Speech Act Theory and Conversation Analysis, the two approaches in fact drew rather different lines around what they would consider as data: the former concentrating very much more on individual linguistic units such as sentences and clauses, the latter very much more on linguistic interaction in which speakers exchange linguistic units. What is data for one map, could be noise for the other.

## The relationship between data and technology

Another issue important for the question of the data is technology. Differing technologies make possible different ways of collecting data. Prior to the microscope and the telescope, basic data about the very small and the very far away was not available. These technological advances changed what could be considered as data for theory building. This relationship between data and technology of course continues, and is just as relevant for linguistics. Prior to the invention of methods for recording sound, 'speech events' were very much more ephemeral-it was impossible to go back and listen to that sound, that sentence, that text, that conversation again. Prior even to writing, language events were even more singular and non-repeatable. As we will see in Chapter 9 below, when we come to examine sounds in rather more detail, the current state of technology has played a formative role in the development of linguistic approaches to sounds and system systems in language—i.e., to *phonetics* and *phonology*.

When researchers began to seek ways of describing systematically and scientifically the actual sounds that people use when speaking, the state

of science in the late 19th century supported some ways of access to the physical situation rather than others. At that time, for example, it was not possible to analyse the sounds produced in terms of their direct physical properties such as fundamental frequencies, duration and amplitude—three parameters which allow a complete description of the sounds being produced, and descriptions were developed in terms drawn from how different sounds were being produced bv configurations of the tongue, lips, etc. in combination with air being passed through the various cavities of the head. This, for several good reasons, is still the usual kind of map that is used for systematically describing the sounds of language events. Technology moves on however-it is not quite possible to measure frequency, duration and amplitude and this then serves as the basic data for certain kinds of very precise inquiry into speech sounds and their use. Moreover, technology continues to move on: it is now becoming possible to investigate, for example, which groups of neurons in the brain are activated in the production of certain sounds and sound sequences and this furthers the kinds of data that can be appealed to in constructing models. Already the consideration of brain activity data has revealed interesting and previously unsuspected phenomena in the area of timing-i.e., precisely when a speaker must start activating certain muscles in order to get particular sounds produced; this is relevant for more detailed theories of language learning and for explaining particular language production mistakes or disabilities.

In short, technologies provide access to different kinds of data but the question of which data one attends to cannot be solved by technology alone—this question needs to be carefully framed with respect to ideas about what we need to build certain kinds of linguistic maps.

The relationship between data and theoretical perspective

As mentioned above, different views of what is to constitute the 'data' for linguistic exploration have been taken. We have already introduced one of the most famous such explicit definitions of what is to be treated and data and what is to be excluded—that of Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*. For Saussure, because only the former of this pair could be relied upon to display language as such, rather than 'noise' caused by all kinds of contingent circumstances having little to do with language, then only the former was to be considered the real object of linguistic study. This illustrates the other, very important, aspect of defining what data is to be accepted: it allows a focusing of attention. Because of Saussure's restriction of study, it was possible to approach many phenomena that previously had not been accessible: quite literally they were barely visible (or audible) among the general noise of language events. This is the positive perspective; of course, from today's perspective one can also argue that it excludes important aspects of language that are *not* irrelevant to how language works. But at the time that Saussure introduced the distinction, one can legitimately maintain that the restriction was perhaps appropriate to the then contemporary state of the art.

The variability of this decision as to what is to be considered data and what not can be shown very well by a further aspect of Saussure's langue/parole distinction—for although it probably sounds quite reasonable as we have discussed it so far, in fact it drew some lines very differently to how we would think of them today. The crucial nature of language for Saussure was that it was a *social* phenomenon. The systematicity of langue was that of a social system—a system of signs that exists and is 'agreed upon' by a society. The vagaries of individuals and their use of language were allocated firmly to parole. But, for Saussure, this included an aspect of language that is nowadays probably considered the clearest example of 'langue' that there is! Saussure considered grammar and syntax, because of the long discussed (e.g., by Descartes) individual human *creativity* that their use displays, properly attributable to parole and not to langue. Thus we find in Saussure much discussion of sounds and their relation to meanings, some morphological combinations, but little about syntax and grammar as a part of the underlying, socially-grounded language system.

Fifty years later Saussure's langue/parole distinction was taken up but given a very different usage by Noam Chomsky. The terms Chomsky introduced, and which are often related to Saussure's, are competence and **performance.** And, again, Chomsky used these to define what was to be considered appropriate data for doing linguistics and what not. Competence refers to the abstract language system, unsullied by mistakes and non-linguistic issues; performance to the actual sounds that come out of someone's mouth or unedited sequences of words that are written. The fundamental difference between Chomsky's terms and Saussure's is that for Chomsky language was no longer to be considered as first and foremost a social phenomenon but instead rather as an *individual* ability—language was to be related not to sociology but to psychology, in particular, to *cognitive* psychology: the study of human cognitive systems. Drawing on this foundation is was then very natural that syntax be accepted as a central (for Chomsky: *the* central) component of the language system. So data for Chomsky was then the 'ideal' grammatical sentences produced by an 'ideal' speaker without considerations of memory lapses, slips of the tongue or other 'noise'.

This has again played a very positive role in several respects. It allowed a focusing on grammatical phenomena that had not previously been possible and which, together with some of the mechanisms for describing grammars that we will see in chapters below, was largely responsible for advancing our knowledge of grammar considerably beyond anything previously possible. This is the focusing role of the decision about what is to be data and what not. But, and again as with all such decisions, there were drawbacks which were already evident when Chomsky made the distinction that he did. For many years, these drawbacks were eclipsed by the very active and positive results of Chomsky's research programme but now, analogously to the situation with Saussure's distinction, increasingly many linguists are redrawing the lines of what must be considered to be data and what not.

Data and linguistic corpora

guistic Linguistic data for Chomsky was (at least in principle) relatively clear: he saw the proper object of investigation for linguistics as all sentences of a language that a speaker of that language would judge to be grammatically acceptable. This (infinite) collection of sentences could be easily gathered by sitting and thinking up sentences, asking others (sometimes) if they also found the sentences grammatical. The fact that people appear to be able to make such judgements so readily, for sentences that they have never seen before, was for Chomsky one of the most intriguing aspects of the *linguistic competence* of individuals and could only be explained by a model which included a detailed system of how grammatical sentences can be constructed and understood.

For some other linguists at the time, this method of data collection appeared, with considerable justification, to be somewhat curious. Rather than 'going out and measuring' data as might be naively assumed from other sciences, the linguist could create data from his or her own linguistic competence—if you can think of a sentence and it judge it to be grammatical then it is a piece of linguistic data. Since, Chomsky argued, all speakers of a language can create and judge all grammatical sentences, it is then pointless to examine what people might actually say, a so-called **corpus** of linguistic events, because this could only reveal a small extract of what they *could* say given their linguistic competence.<sup>7</sup> In Chomsky's words:

"Any natural corpus will be skewed. Some sentences won't occur because they are obvious, others because they are false, still others because they are impolite. The corpus, if natural, will be so wildly skewed that the description ... would be no more than a mere list." (Chomsky, 1962:159)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> In terms of the broader development of science and philosophies of science, we see here another instance of a very long-term debate: that between *rationalist* and *empiricist* approaches to obtaining knowledge.

This was a dramatic change of orientation compared to the extensive data collection activities of an earlier generation of linguists and gave rise to exchanges such as the following between a data-oriented linguist of the time and Chomsky:

- "Chomsky: The verb *perform* cannot be used with mass word objects: one can *perform* a task but one cannot *perform labour*.
- Hatcher: How do you know, if you don't use a corpus and have not studied the verb *perform*?
- Chomsky: How do I know? Because I am a native speaker of the English language." (Hill, 1962:29)

This 'debate' cited in McEnery and Wilson (1996) in their introduction to what is now a central area of linguistics—**corpus linguistics**—serves to illustrate both the reliance that was then to be placed on this remarkable human capacity called linguistic competence and Chomsky's unmistakable style of argument. This orientation certainly had an overwhelming effect on the practice and theory of linguistics for at least two decades, and it is still taken as defining 'core' or 'mainstream' linguistics by many. Looking at the exchange more closely, however, McEnery and Wilson point out that it also:

"underlines why corpus data might be useful. Chomsky was, in fact, wrong. One can *perform magic*, for example, as a check of a corpus such as the [British National Corpus] reveals. Native-speaker intuition merely allowed Chomsky to be wrong with an air of absolute certainty." (McEnery and Wilson, 1996:11)

Thus it has become abundantly clear over the last 30 years that 'native speaker judgements' concerning their language behaviour and the language behaviour of others have to be viewed with considerable caution. There are several aspects of linguistic behaviour which speakers do *not* have ready access to and any 'data' produced solely in this way is itself bound to be skewed in ways reminiscent of the ways Chomsky above criticised natural corpora of.

The scepticism concerning idealisations and abstractions away from the 'actual data' of a speech event has been taken up by many linguists nowadays. Any kind of distance from 'what actually happened' in a speech situation is then to be considered suspect. But this brings us naturally back to technology. Written language can be collected reliably in large quantities: the standard corpora, such as the British National Corpus (BNC) mentioned above, regularly contain large numbers of words (e.g., 100 million words in the case of the BNC), most of which are drawn from written texts. The natural wish to analyse spoken

language, as might be required for the Conversation Analytic studies used above, have presented problems. It has only recently become possible to store large amounts of actual recorded spoken language in ways that make it amenable to analysis—most typically spoken language is still **transcribed**: that is, a written version of the spoken language is made which tries to maintain as many of the *relevant* features of the actually spoken sounds as possible. And, again, what is relevant and what not is a matter of theoretical decision since all written representations will be an abstraction in some degree. Spoken corpora, containing actually recorded speech and indexed and organized in a way that supports their investigation are now beginning to become available, and this will be certain to advance our understanding of many aspects of naturally occurring language.

Even a recorded version of a conversation may not be sufficient for all questions. As soon as one studies the interaction of, for example, language and gesture, or interaction and gaze (where one is looking while speaking)—both important when considering the nature of turn-taking in conversation—then a full video-recording of the situation might be important. And, again, the technologies that allow video recordings to be accessed in ways that allow systematic large-scale study are just becoming available. Moreover, any video recording is itself an abstraction—a particular camera-angle is not the angle of the participants; so there are still real problems in obtaining fully naturalistic data.

It may also not be necessary for *all* research questions. The question of data thus has to be weighed carefully. One needs always to be aware that any particular data collection abstracts away from the actual language events and that it is possible that important information has been lost in the process.

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The discussion is a much simplified and shortened rendering of the detailed introduction and analysis presented in:

- Levinson, S.C. (1983) *Pragmatics*, Cambridge, England : Cambridge University Press. Chapters 5 and 6.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S.C. (1987) *Politeness: some universals in language usage*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

#### Corpora:

McEnery, T. and Wilson, A. (1996) *Corpus Linguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

The debates and interpretations about de Saussure's thought naturally continue; one recent reappraisal of his work is the following, which questions many of the simplistic criticisms that have been brought subsequently against the particular positions attributed to the *Course in General Linguistics*.

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# 5 From early maps to first models

WHAT WE ARE DOING THIS CHAPTER.

We have now explored the notion of a map of the linguistic territory and the fact that there can be several maps of overlapping areas. In this chapter we turn more explicitly to some fundamental properties of the maps of language and how these were developed to become theories. We will see that language has some essential properties that are necessary for it to function. Any map of the linguistic territory therefore has to be sensitive to these details. It is convenient for our discussion now to introduce a parting of the ways among several distinct approaches to linguistics; this means that there are some fundamentally different models of language that have been set up, each asking rather different questions. The twentieth century saw an immense diversification of the approaches taken to language and to linguistic theorising with new directions of investigation arising both in Europe and the United States. It is this diversification that largely contributes to the feeling occasionally voiced that linguists have far too many words for 'essentially the same thing' and that a simplification/rationalisation is called for. As we will also try and make clear here, and as we saw in the discussion of speech acts and conversational analysis above, this is actually seldom the case: the different terms used often draw on different theoretical questions and orientations and this background cannot be ignored.

One of the most important directions developed in the United States from the 1920s onwards built extensively on the presumed connection between linguistics and models of explanation proposed in the sciences. This new direction combined two distinctive elements.

First, largely as a reaction against the attention given to the old European languages (i.e., Latin and Greek) that dominated European theorising at that time, there was a wish to come to terms with the vast diversity of the native American Indian languages. All of these have radically divergent structures to that of Latin and Greek and so, on the one hand, presented new challenges and, on the other, justified a certain scepticism concerning the relevance of the then widespread traditional European grammatical models.

Second, there was a further alignment with a mode of scientific inquiry then becoming popular called behaviourism (most famously promoted by B.F.Skinner). This approach to linguistics was set out by the linguist Leonard Bloomfield, particularly in his 1933 book Language. For Bloomfield, the way to study language linguistically was to stay with what was directly observable, and to move by painstaking analysis from these observables to larger patterns of such observables. Anything that was not observable was seen, following behaviourism, to be 'unscientific' and unreliable.

Thus, the Bloomfieldian linguist always started from observable data: for example, a particular utterance spoken by a speaker of a formerly unknown language. Then, by collecting a large sample of such utterances, the linguist should be able to work out what sounds occur in that language, and how these sounds effect each other when placed in proximity and pronounced one after the other. The linguist should then be able to detect reoccurring patterns: i.e., certain sequences of sounds might occur several times, others never. On this basis the linguist would be on the way to discovering 'words'.

The principle methodological target of Bloomfieldian linguistics was therefore to work out a set of discovery procedures by means of which the painstaking analyses required could be carried out most effectively. Eventually, enough of these patterns might be detected in order to allow the linguist to make some statements of patterns ranging over kinds of words, and the way would be open to syntax and grammar. You will notice that stories about 'meaning' do not play an important role here: for Bloomfield, 'meaning' fell into the category of an unobservable and so was not compatible with the tenets of behaviourism where any appeal to a presumed 'understanding' of the language was ruled out as building on 'unknowables' inside people's heads. Although this probably sounds strange to us nowadays, at the time this scientific orientation had a very prominent status and was considered to offer a significant 'way forward' and did, in fact, begin to reveal some useful details of the grammar of human languages. We will see some of the results of this painstaking course of investigation in the next chapter.

Thus, largely without recourse to meaning, you can say a lot about the structure of the grammar of a language. Even though, as we shall see, it was superseded radically by the developments in linguistics of the 1960s, it is important not to underestimate the achievement this represented. It took some steps essential for modern linguistics, steps concerned primarily with being explicit about the kind of evidence, or data, that is admissible for working out the details of a linguistic model, and the methods by which theories could be both constructed and tested.

This put the development of accounts of language onto a rather more secure foundation than had previously been the case. Basic linguistic units were established on the basis of their linguistic behaviour primarily how they could or could not combine with ther linguistic units and in what kinds of contexts. This is called a distributional approach: such approaches look at how linguistic items distribute themselves in their contexts of use, and can be applied to any level of linguistic analysis. In the mostly comparative and historical work of the 19th. century, this technique has become well established for sound phenomona; Bloomfieldian structural linguistics then took it considerably further to describe the combinations of words into phrases.

Work in Europe took a rather different direction. There the connection with meaning was not severed—indeed, many very significant linguists took the connection to meaning as essential. While this direction had the positive effect of maintaining a link with the uses of language and provided a convenient basis for the beginnings of applied linguistics, it did less to provide detailed accounts of linguistic form. It may have been partly this lack that led to the wide acceptance also in Europe of the style of American linguistics that replaced Bloomfieldian linguistics in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the linguistic school initiated by Noam Chomsky. Following the first publications in Chomskyan linguistics, distinctively European linguistics went into the shadows and attention to meaning suffered. It is largely this period in linguistic history that gave rise to the idea, still common today, that linguistics is essentially an academic study with little contact to real problems of language use and which has led some to take great pains to distance their (clearly linguistic in the sense defined in this introduction) activities from 'linguistics' as narrowly defined.

Both the American structuralist and the European traditions have been related back to the ancient Greeks—but to different areas of intellectual endeavour. The structuralists, especially in the Chomskyan school, draw considerably on the development of logic, whereas some of the most significant directions in European linguistics can be related more to rhetoric. Here again we see a broad distinction between form and function: the study of logic seeks methods for guaranteeing that chains of inference are correct and does so by describing the forms of inference that will provide valid conclusions; the study of rhetoric seeks ways of expressing communicative intentions in ways that will achieve communicative functions in a communicative context. These two maps of the territory thus highlight very different properties of the terain they are describing, and the division between their respective schools of linguistics is a deep one. Nevertheless, both have important insights to offer.

#### 5.1 From words to word-classes: form and function

Western linguistics begun primarily with the attempts made by the ancient Greeks to understand the phenomenon of language—mostly Greek and its dialects. Since then, there has been a steady refinement of the kinds of units recognised as necessary for understanding how language is structured. This started with a recognition that different kinds of words appeared in different places and appeared to do different kinds of communicative work. The table below, for example, taken from Robins' Short history of linguistics sketches some of the early stages of this progressive refinement. Beginning from a basic division of a sentence into two parts—the ónoma and the rhêma


(corresponding to a 'subject' and 'what is said of that subject') subsequent scholars found further differences in the behaviour of 'words' so as to arise at a list of parts of speech more or less corresponding to what is commonly taught today: the nouns, adjectives, prepositions, etc. of school grammar.

As emphasised above, the decisions made in the construction of these early 'maps' of the territory were also of necessity driven by their purposes. It was Plato's and Aristotle's overriding concern here to be able to formulate statements concerning 'truth' and the nature of the world. Starting with the simplest sentences, made up in Greek of just two words—along the lines of:

#### Mary runs.

we can note that if we take either word in isolation, then we can say little about its 'truth' or correspondence to the world, but when the two come together we have a statement, one which can be denied, questioned, argued about, thought etc. This combination is then captured in the first division into, essentially, Subject and Predicate. Later, by the time of what is often considered the first proper grammar in the western world, Thrax's Grammatik ` Téchn (around the first century B.C.), we have a different purpose: there was a driving need to teach Greek in all of the lands that the Greek empire had expanded into; so here we need the greater division and descriptions required for a pedagogical grammar—a grammar that can be used for teaching and learning. However, here too, there was still a very crude notion of grammatical structure, attention was still firmly focused on the 'word'. In this, as Pieter Seuren notes: "When philosophising about language, the early ancient philosophers were not so different from ordinary people nowadays, who think that language is just a collection of words. There is no clear focus on grammatical rules and structures. Words is what people commonly see and have in mind when they speak about language." (Seuren, 1998:9)

And this perspective has lasted in the 'school' tradition of grammars and learning well into our own times.

But there are problems with these word classes so carefully arrived at after this long period of study—especially when we stray from the kinds of languages that played such an important role in their construction: i.e., Latin and Greek. This situation is summarised well by John Lyons:

"It is important to realise, however, that the traditional list of ten or so parts of speech is very heterogeneous in composition and reflects, in many of the details of the definitions that accompany it, specific features of the grammatical structure of Greek and Latin that are far from being universal. Furthermore, the definitions themselves are often logically defective. Some of them are circular; and most of them combine inflectional, syntactic and semantic criteria which yield conflicting results when they are applied to a wide range of particular instances in several languages. ... Like most of the definitions in traditional grammar, they rely heavily upon the good sense and tolerance of those who apply and interpret them." (Lyons, 1981:109)

It should not then be too surprising then that, when we consider a language with a very different kind of organisation to Latin and Greek—for example, English—we run into immediate difficulties. Let us take some simple sentences and try to answer the question of to which word class, or parts of speech, the words in those sentences should be allocated. That is, we take the final line of the diagram above as the map of our territory—the territory of the words of the English language—and use this to answer our question.

Consider the words 'Bathurst', 'town' and 'country' in the following sentences. The first sentence is:

• *Bathurst* is a *town* in the *country* 

Here we should with some confidence say that Bathurst is a proper name and both 'town' and 'country' are nouns. We can justify this *distributionally* by noting that 'country' and 'town' are the kinds of word that comes after an article (e.g., the definite article 'the'), that can be made into a plural by placing some variant of *-s* after them (i.e., *countries, towns*), etc. But now look at the following:

- Bathurst is a *country* town
- My cousin has bought a *town* house in Bathurst
- Stop here for a real *Bathurst* experience

It would now not be surprising if you find the decision about what word class is involved a little more difficult. This is because words of the same word class are being used for very different functions, and if you try and describe word class in terms of functions then you will easily be led astray. While our map of the territory may be accurate, we seem to have lost a way of relating what we see on the ground with what we see on the map. It is as if the map shows a symbol indicating a group of trees and we find several actual groups of trees and do not know quite which group of trees we are standing in front of.

There are a number of responses to this problem. We can either say that particular words can belong to more than one word-class. Then 'Bathurst' is a proper name and an adjective, while 'town' is both a noun and an adjective. We are led in this direction if we start letting the function of a word play a more important role in deciding its word-class. As we can see from the diagram, for the Greeks this was not really an issue: there is a ready mixture of function and form. The descriptions of a particular part of speech are often in terms of what a corresponding word achieves in and for its sentence. This is also precisely the move that has been made prominently a number of times in recent language education. If you try and identify, for example, verbs as 'doing words', or words describing an action, and adjectives are words that ascribe properties, then sentences such as these above will naturally lead you to consider 'town' as, sometimes, an adjective. This is an example of the kind of map-simplification referred to above: because it is assumed that it is easier to understand what a 'doing' word is, this has been adopted as a way of teaching about parts of speech.

This is, however, unfortunate; it is a good example of how making things simpler can lead to an unusable map. An analogy, only a little exaggerated, would be to remove the stations shown on the underground map above because that simplifies the diagram. The result is a simpler looking diagram; it just happens not to be a usable diagram. We can get a more acute sense of this problem by considering one further, more extreme example: the following famous line<sup>:8</sup>

### "But me no buts."

Here we have an item of a particular word class—conjunction—being made to function as both a verb (imperative form: giving an order) and a noun (and a plural noun at that!). If we allowed function to determine word-class, then we would need to say here that 'but' can be a verb and a noun. By this stage, we should have a feeling that something is seriously wrong. We could try and say that 'but' is being used as a verb or a noun, but how do we know then what verbs and nouns are? What started as an attempt to make word-class teaching simpler ends up by unravelling in chaos; languages like English (in sharp contrast to German) do not place strong constraints on the functions that particular word-classes perform, but that does not mean that they do not have word-classes.

Examples such as this should not make us give up our classification of 'but' as a conjunction; indeed to do so would leave us unable to explain why this example has the effect (and affect) that it does. It is a possible English sentence, but it is not a very usual one: precisely because it plays with the difference between formal categories, such as parts of speech, and functional categories, such as Processes, Participants, Themes, etc. To deal with this rather common phenomenon, we need instead to be able to relate our formal and functional views to one another, without throwing one away at the expense of the other. Thus here we have a straightforward combination of Process ('but') and Participants ('no buts'), but the fillers of these functions are not the usual verb and nouns that we typically expect.

In short then, one simplification of the map of the linguistic territory which nearly always leads into more trouble than it is worth is precisely this omission of the difference between form and function. Weakening the distributional grounds for deciding on parts of speech looses much that has been gained over the 2000 years or so it has taken to work them out! Word classes are formal categories, they can be worked out reliably on the basis of what kinds of words can appear in what kinds of patterns; it is not appropriate to prejudge the question of the functions that they can achieve by building this into their definition. Particular word classes can play more than one function and this is sometimes an important fact that allows us to decode the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Often attributed to Shakespeare but apparently first found somewhere else: exercise for the reader!

distinctive meanings that are being expressed. Returning to our first examples above, the fact that 'town' (a noun) is used to 'modify' another noun in the sentence:

## My cousin has bought a *town* house in Bathurst

is how English signals that a very different kind of relationship holds than that when a normal adjective appears:

# My cousin has bought an *old* house in Bathurst

Whereas in the latter sentence we have a straightforward attribution of the property of 'being old' to the bought house, in the former there is no property involved of 'being town(-y?)'; the meaning is quite different. The grammatical construction indicates that there is a particular class of houses called 'town houses'. The difference is also grammaticized in other languages of course; for example, in German, the latter example would receive a simple adjective whereas the former is more likely to be expressed as a compound noun.

A confusion of diverse functions is still one of the most common mistakes made when considering the kinds of terms to use for language analysis. In Robins' table, for example, we see that formerly 'pronouns' were considered to be more similar to 'conjunctions' than to 'nouns'. This is not supported at all by *distributional* arguments: i.e., pronouns do not occur in the same linguistic places as conjunctions, they occur more in the places that nouns (more exactly, noun phrases: see below) occur. But the table shows that the division has been made partially on functional grounds: pronouns are like conjunctions in that they 'link' parts of a text together; but this is not a very reliable criterion for proposing a systematic treatment of word classes.<sup>9</sup> Here the discipline suggested by the Bloomfieldian structuralists presents a useful lesson—sometimes moving too quickly away from directly observable phenomena really is a slippery slope into chaos.

# 5.2 From chain to structure

The availability of a detailed account of what words are, to which classes they belong, etc. still does not help us with understanding the basic nature of language: in fact, it can distract us from that nature. Concentrating on words does not move us beyond seeing examples of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The concentration on words at the expense of sentences and their form and function has a long history—the same history that we saw above in the development of the parts of speech in fact; it is interesting to note that not all linguistic traditions have gone through this direction—traditional Indian linguistics (which predates ancient Greek linguistics considerably), for example, also emphasised the primacy of the sentence (cf. Robins, 1997, p173).

language as items that are strung together one after the other: very much like beads on a string, or links in a chain. This kind of map of language also has a very limited application; and it can also lead to some rather dubious routes being followed. Language in fact has a radically different structure to this and it is essential to understand this difference in order to get anywhere with language analysis at all.

Some humorous examples of how language is *not* organised like beads on a string are given in Stephen Pinker's *The Language Instinct*. Consider the following utterance, allegedly from a young child:

"Daddy, what did you bring that book that I don't want to be read to out of up for?"

This utterance receives it humorous effect from its radical disregard of any such 'rule' of proper English style (note: *proscriptive*, not linguistic!) such as 'do not leave prepositions dangling at the end of a sentence'; but the sentence is perfectly understandable and could, quite easily, have been produced by a young child. But if we examine this sentence a bit more closely and ask what the selection of those final prepositions—*to*, *out of*, *up*, *for*—depends on, we find that there is a surprising feat of memory involved; this is indicated in the following, which shows the pieces of linguistic information that the correct selection of each of those prepositions at the end relies upon.

"Daddy, what did you bring that book that I don't want to be read to out of up for?"



Thus, the selection of for, for example, is only there because of the selection of what—as it forms part of the phrase "what ... for"—and yet the child has no difficulty in remembering this over the 16 words intervening. And if that were not enough, the child is also remembering all the other dependencies at the same time. We can see clearly, then, that the selection of particular prepositions is being 'conditioned' by word selections that can be a considerable distance away in the sentence. How is it that these selections are, apparently, held in memory so effortlessly?

Here is another example cited by Pinker:

"How Anne Salisbury can claim that Pam Dawber's anger at not receiving her share of acclaim for *Mork and Mindy*'s success derives from a fragile ego escapes me."

What are the dependencies here?

We might think, if we do not dwell on it too closely, that people can produce these kinds of sentence for the simple reason that they can remember the words that were spoken and so can quickly determine the prepositions required. However, this is just not true: : in fact, people are in general very bad at remembering exact wordings or loose sequences of words. Another example of this drawn by Pinker from Alice through the looking-glass is the following:

"Can you do addition?" the White Queen asked. "What's one and one?"

"I don't know", said Alice. "I lost count."

"She can't do Addition", the Red Queen interrupted.

Here the sequence of a 'mere' ten *ones* is enough to bring Alice (and the rest of us) into some confusion: despite the fact that the child above (and the rest of us too) were perfectly able to remember that a *for* should come after 16 words had passed. The kind of linguistic trick shown with the dangling prepositions is not possible just because people are very good at remembering what words have been said—they are not.

There is, then, some important difference between the chain of ten ones and the prepositions stacked up at the end of the sentence. This difference is actually one that turns out to be crucial for understanding both what language is and how it works; and that difference is *structure*. The examples of dependencies between the prepositions and the conditioning elements show a rich linguistic structuring that the simple sequence of one in the Alice example does not. People are not very good at counting and remembering simple lists, but they are very good at remembering and manipulating structure. Without structure, there can be no language.

A further good example of a demonstration of the role of structure in human languages is the following, given by Noam Chomsky. Chomsky is often credited with revolutionising the entire field of linguistics when, in his 1957 publication Syntactic Structures, he showed how the description of linguistic structure could be made substantially more precise than had previously been the case. He also redefined some the basic goals of linguistics and arguments persist to this day as to whether some of those new goals make sense or not. However, as with de Saussure, some of the insights are certain to remain with us. His example of the importance of structure is straightforward and does not require any particularly complex theoretical apparatus. We know as linguistic facts that we can produce sentences in English such as:

- Mary is going to the park.
- Is Mary going to the park?

Let us assume, Chomsky says, that we are visited by a group of Martian linguist/anthropologists who have no information whatsoever about English grammar. They observe the sentences above, work out that the latter appears to be a question-form of the former, and come to ask themselves how speakers of English make question-forms. It appears to be the case that if a speaker can produce a sentence in the first form, then they can also make a question out of it: children seem to be able to do this, too. Therefore all English speakers must know how to do this trick and, what is more, they can do it with sentences that they have never heard before. There must be some 'rule'; so our Martin linguist/anthropologists try to work out what that rule might be.

The Martians also observe, however, that speakers of English can form relative clause constructions; that is, they can take a sentence such as the statement form above, and readily produce sentences such as:

- Mary is going to the park, which is on her way to work.
- Mary, who likes skateboarding, is going to the park.

Now, our Martian visitors wonder, how do speakers of English make questions out of sentences like these that include the relative clause? Let us make, with our Martin visitors, the most simple possible assumption consistent with the facts of the first two sentences: that is, to make a question, you move the first verb you find to the front of the sentence.<sup>10</sup>

Actually this works very well, at least for this and very similar sentences. It is an example of a linguistic hypothesis that is to account for some linguistic data. When we have a hypothesis, we need then to check it against other data: we need to see if the hypothesis is confirmed or rejected by the other data. The hypothesis works for the first of our sentences involving relative clauses, too:

• Mary is going to the park, which is on her way to work.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Note that the fact that you probably find this an unusual suggestion for a rule already shows that, at least intuitively, you also know that the real stuff of language is structure!

• (is) Mary going to the park, which is on her way to work?

So far so good: the hypothesis is confirmed. Our Martin linguist/anthropologists are happy: they may be on the track of something. Unfortunately, it does not take long to find counterexamples to the hypothesis. Carrying out the hypothesised strategy for asking a question on the second of the relative clause containing sentences above produces:

• Likes Mary, who skateboarding, is going to the park?

This sentence is not very intelligible, and however we interpret it is unlikely to come close to being the interrogative form of the second sentence. So what has gone wrong?

As speakers of English we do not have too much difficulty with coming up with a better hypothesis—but notice the terms in which that hypothesis will need to be expressed. In order to describe the strategy that we use for forming questions it is unavoidable that we refer to structure. We must be able to identify the clause which is the clause whose truth is to be questioned and to ignore all the other potential clauses (such as the relative clauses) which are not to be interrogated. The rule of question-formation, similarly to just about every other rule of grammar, is structure-dependent. In order to state the rule, we need to assume that the linguistic units being operated on possess significant degrees of structure. Otherwise, like the Martians, we will never come up with an hypothesis that stands the test of data for any time at all. The fact that there this structure dependence appears to be picked up by children learning language very quickly has led to a broad area of sometimes very heated debate: some, following Chomsky, suggest that the kinds of structures that the child can learn are already given by the structures of our brains; others treat this hypothesis with considerable caution if not scorn. We are a long way from knowing how the debate will turn out, but however it does, it is certain that language requires structure.

There is also a final, further slant to be taken on the notion of linguistic structure. The above examples and illustrations should have made the point that it appears to be the case that human language uses some notion of structure. In fact, the situation is much stronger than this. Structure is an essential component of human language: quite simply, if language did not work using structure then it would not be able to do the jobs it does for us. Communication would not work..

The question for linguistics is then what kinds of structure does language employ—can we be more specific about these kinds of structures both in general, i.e., for languages as such, and in particular, for individual languages and groups of languages. And the answer is 'yes': we can be a lot more specific. We also need to be more specific in order to avoid confusion in both our understanding and in our analyses of texts and sentences. Consider the sentence:

Yesterday I noticed my accountant repairing the toilet.

If we seek the Processes, Participants and Circumstances of this sentence, it is quite easy to come up with the following:



Here, the Circumstances, Processes and Participants have been recognised reasonably well, but a crucial aspect of the meaning has been lost completely: just to what Process do the individual

Participants and Circumstances belong? Is, for example, 'the toilet' a A small\gnome participant in the event of 'noticing'? in the sarden And how can a sentence have two Processes? Is the 'I' a participant in the wipad 'repairing'? Probably not—the problem here is his hands not with our understanding of the sentence but with our representation of that understanding as a chain, as a series of linguistic beads on a string. This is just the same as the simple list of *ones* in the Alice example: without structure important information goes missing and we cannot recover the intended meanings.

In order to build structures, we need to have some basic grammatical building blocks, or units, with which we can build. The particular linguistic model that one is working with has as part of its job to define the linguistic units that are to be used. Different models sometimes define different units—this is not a weakness, rather another indication that sometimes different kinds of questions require different kinds of answers. We will see further models and the units they define below, as well as indicating some of the features of the questions the models are serving as answers to. In general, we always need to bring together the model used, i.e., the map, and the questions being asked, i.e., what we are using the map for. As suggested above, the wrong map for the task can lead to more confusion than no map at all.



We will start with two alternative for talking about structure in more detail. They have points where they come together and say the same things about linguistic units, and they also have points where they diverge. The divergences are because they are considering different questions. Thus we might have two maps of the world, one of the political divisions of countries, and another of the paths of rivers; or, again, our London underground map above and a

street map. In both cases, the two maps are for quite different purposes, but there may well be some useful points of correspondence as well.

# 5.3 Rank vs. Intermediate Constituency views of structure

To get started, we can consider a rather simple model that already contains within it the essential aspects of structure that make human language what it is. This model suggests four distinct kinds of grammatical unit: clauses, groups and phrases, words and morphemes. These units together are called the *rank scale*; and so the kind of model/map that uses them is one which we can term rankbased. In the rank-based view of structure, each unit in the list is made up out of a combination of units taken from the next in the list: i.e., clauses are built up out of groups, groups are built up out of words, and words are built up out of morphemes. Thus, given any clause, we should be able to take it apart, first into groups, then each group into words, etc. This is a simple model partly because it is closely related to the functional notions of Processes, Participants and Circumstances: often, grammatical units of this kind stand in a very simple relationship to these functions—but the grammatical units are not themselves functional. They are motivated by the kinds of distributional properties typical of form and which we will see in more detail later on.

One common metaphor used for describing grammatical form is that of Chinese boxes, or boxes within boxes within boxes. Thus, if we take the clause spread out on a chain above right, we can re-represent this to bring out its structure more effectively by deciding which groups are present and how these all fit together to make the clause. This is shown below.



The outer box represents the clause as a whole, and each box inside this represents a group. There are different kinds of groups, essentially distinguished by the type of the main word they revolve around: thus 'his hands' revolves around the noun 'hands' and so is called a **nominal group**; in contrast, the (very small) group 'wiped' revolves around the word 'wiped' (since that is the only word there!) and is therefore called a **verbal group**. There is one kind of group where it is not so clear what revolves around what: with 'in the garden' does the information revolve around the preposition 'in' or around the nominal group 'the garden'? In order not to have to make an arbitrary decision, we can accept both as contributing equally to the grammatical unit by calling it a **phrase** rather than a group: 'in the garden' is therefore a prepositional phrase. It is typically the case that when analysing clauses that the Process will be signalled via a verbal group, the Participants will be nominal groups, and Circumstances will be prepositional phrases: this is, indeed, probably one of the main motivations for there being these particular kinds of structural unit in the first place.

A further, crucial property of linguistic structure is already present in our simple example and we should note it here in passing: if we look carefully at what types of groups and phrases are involved, we can see that boxes can have boxes *of the same type* within them: i.e., the nominal group box 'The gnome in the garden' has another nominal group box within it 'the garden'. We will return to this phenomenon, which is called *recursion*, in Chapter 6 below; perhaps surprisingly, without this single phenomenon human language would not be possible. Any model that therefore leaves out recursion is not a model of human language.

There is one further complication that can occur to our box structures when looking at real texts, and that is that it is possible to string (or chain!) together boxes of the same kind to make a bigger box of the same kind: for example, we can take a single nominal group 'the gnome' and chain together a further collection of nominal groups 'the gnome, the chicken, and the fox' into another single grammatical unit. The result is still a nominal group, but to indicate its more complex internal organisation, we call it a **nominal group complex**. Most grammatical units can receive the same treatment: we therefore have **verbal group complexes**, **word** complexes, and **clause complexes**. Importantly, in any complex, you can only combine the *same kind* of unit. That is, a nominal group complex can only consist of a chain of nominal groups, a clause complex can only consist of a chain of clauses, and so on. Sometimes there are additional words that function to stick the elements of the chain together, or to 'combine' them, but the basic rule remains. So, for example, the 'and' (and indeed the commas—although these are not part of the syntax) in the nominal groups into a chain. And in a clause complex such as:

John went to the park because he wanted a walk.

we have two clauses 'John went to the park' and 'he wanted a walk', and these are combined by the clause combiner because into a clause complex.

When we try and write out an entire grammatical structure, with all its boxes within boxes from clause down to morpheme, the resulting diagram can look rather complicated. To avoid this, in linguistics we generally use not boxes, but a kind of tree diagram to represent the structure involved. This is shown below: boxes inside boxes are replaced by branches in the tree. This kind of diagram is much easier to read once the structures become more complicated. It is also much easier to focus on precisely the relationships or the information in the tree that is of interest to the question being asked: many kinds of complex grammatical processes can be expressed relatively simply in terms of a tree configuration: we shall see some of these later on.

Language, and its interpreters, relies on structure to make sure that this kind of information, i.e., to which Process the Participants and Circumstances belong, or what modifies what, does *not* get lost. Structure allows the complex range of meanings that are made in each



and every sentence to be recovered: without structure the meanings would be mixed together irrecoverably: just as with the dependencies that are lost with the beads on the string. This is, then, a further simplification in the map of language that

should be made only with very great care and attention. Chains are easier to understand than structure: they are accordingly appealed to (almost always however *implicitly*) in basic introductions to language and linguistics. The 'benefit' is that they lead the learner into an illusion of having understood more than they have. If the learner never needs to know more, then the simplification is, perhaps, justifiable; but if they deal linguistically—i.e., systematically—with very much language, they will find themselves unprepared for what real language throws at them. It looks simpler, and language *does* have chain-like organisations—e.g., the string of verbs in 'I *am going to start trying to think* of an answer'—but it also has much more, more significant structure which the serious student of language needs to be comfortable with.

We will return to the issue of 'appropriate simplifications' later on, when we have seen more of the basic positions and frameworks needed to discuss them.

The rank-based view of structure illustrated above is not the only view of structure that could be taken. While all linguistic theories and models propose some view of structure (this, as we have suggested above, is a sine qua non for understanding human language in any case), they do not all use the same map. Some maps differ substantially; others less so. The other main view of structure that we will introduce here is called immediate constituency analysis. This is perhaps the most widespread view of linguistic structure currently in use—although this does not mean that it is the most useful for your purposes. Remember: the map must serve the task. It is necessary, however, to understand the basics of immediate constituency (also termed IC) analysis in order to participate in linguistic discourse.

As we have seen, rank-based the view of clause structure divides up a clause into units that are often quite straightforwardly related to the transitivity roles that we have talked about before. But there are lots of other of ways cutting up a clause: and how do we



know when we have cut one up enough?

Immediate constituency analysis solves this in the following way. Any linguistic unit is divided into two sub-units—its 'immediate' constituents. And then each of these is further divided into two, and so on, until no more division is possible. As might be imagined, the immediate constituency view results in many more constituents than a typical rank-based analysis. But there are no questions remaining as to whether one has divided the clause up sufficiently or not. The method is extremely systematic and can, therefore, be applied to any linguistic unit.

If we compare a rank-based decomposition with an immediateconstituency based decomposition, we can see some of the points of overlap and some of the differences. In general, the rank-based structure is 'flatter' than the IC-based structure. This makes it easier but comes at a cost. Just as there are problems that we have seen with the simple 'chain'-like view of linguistic units, there are also similar problems with the relatively chain-like (at least compared to the IC analysis) rank-based analysis. There appear to be linguistic processes which are responsive to more structure than the rank-based analysis shows. Whether one needs the extra structure really depends on the questions being asked: it is not a question of one structure being the 'right' one and the other being 'wrong'. We shall see below that a further, probably more significant difference between the two approaches lies in the fact that they are drawn from completely different linguistic schools, and so have been developed in order address different questions.

A central issue for the IC analysis is, of course, where one makes the cut. Each unit is to be divided into two further subunits—but where? We will see in the following chapter some of the methods and tools that linguists have developed for deciding where a linguistic unit should be cut; these are the 'tests and probes' for constituency structure. Some of the places to cut are fairly obvious, others more subtle. And, again, some will depend on which criteria, and hence on which questions, are being set.

What is sometimes problematic is the fact that authors sometimes mix up the labels when talking about the two maps. This happens so often that one just has to get used to it: in each case, it is necessary to establish which particular map of the phenomena an author is using and then to understand the terms used as applying to that map rather than another. An example of this is the use of the linguistic terms 'verb phrase' and 'verbal group'. We have suggested here that verbal group belongs to the rank-scale, and is hence a rank-based category; some authors use verb phrase for exactly the same linguistic unit however—often for reasons of 'simplification', although the simplification this achieves is of the confusing kind rather than the genuinely simplifying kind. The two units—the rank-based verbal group and the IC-based verb phrase—in fact very rarely coincide because the criteria for their recognition, and the work that they are expected to do within the two models, is quite different.

The verbal group, as we have seen, corresponds to the linguistic constituent of the clause that contains the information about the event or activity that is occurring; that is, it is most straightforwardly associated with the Process in a transitivity analysis. In contrast, the motivation for the verbal group goes back more to the Greek view of logic and 'predication': that is, the verbal group is the statement that is made about, or 'predicated of', some subject. This traditional view is, for many purpose, perfectly valid and useful; it is also assumed by some to be so obvious as to barely require further explanation. Bloomfield in his early work from 1914 wrote:

"Thus in the sentence *Lean horses run fast* the subject is *lean horses* and the horse's action, *run fast*, is the predicate. Within the subject there is the further analysis into a subject *horses* and its attribute *lean*, expressing the horse's quality. In the predicate *fast* is an attribute of the subject *run*." (Bloomfield, 1914: 61)

And so here, in Bloomfield (and most other)'s analysis, the obvious first cut is into the Subject and the Predicate and the Predicate corresponds to the verb phrase. This is different from the rank-based analysis, which would have only the "run" as the verbal group and place "fast" as a parallel ('sibling') adverbial group constituent. The verbal group is playing the role of Process, and the adverbial group the role of a Circumstance (of manner) as usual.

When authors write of a verb phrase, or a verbal group, therefore, it is necessary to consider what they mean with this: for them, does the 'verbal phrase' in an example such as that of Bloomfield's correspond just to the "run" (in which case it belongs more to the rank-based model) or to the "run fast" (in which case it corresponds more to the IC-based model). We will see some of the (actually rather incontrovertible) evidence that there is some kind of cut along the lines suggested by the IC analysis in the next chapter, although it is not always necessary to use this division. Whatever names authors give to these units does not change the fact that there are two genuinely different 'notions' in the grammar that we can refer to. If we only have names for one of these notions, then our account is simpler, but also weaker.

## A note on diagrams.

We have now started to see a range of presentation devices employed for talking about linguistic structure. Instead of describing a sentence textually, in linguistics we much prefer to draw a tree diagram, or some other kind of diagram, in order to get the point across. There is a very good reason for this. A textual description of structure is not the most succinct way of describing a tree structure; in fact, it is a very inappropriate way of talking about structure. This can be seen very well in this example drawn from Peter Seuren (1998) to make just this point.

The following extract is from Edward Sapir, one of the foremost American linguists of this century, writing in 1921. Sapir describes the structure of the Amerindian word 'wii-to-kuchum-punku-rügani-yugwi-va-ntü-m(ü)', meaning they who are going to sit and cut up with a knife someone's black cow/bull:

"One example will do for thousands, one complex type for hundreds of possible types. I select from Paiute, the language of the Indians of the arid plateaus of southwestern Utah. The word wii-to-kuchum-punku-rüganiyugwi-va-ntü-m(ü) is of unusual length even for its own language, but it is no psychological monster for all that. It means "they who are going to sit and cut up with a knife a black cow (or bull)", or, in the order of the elements. "knife-black-buffalo-pet-cut-up-sit Indian (plur.)-futureparticiple-animate-plural". The formula of this word, in accordance with our symbolism, would be (F)+(E)+C+d+A+B+(g)+(h)+(i)+(0). It is the plural of the future participle of a compound verb "to sit and cut up" – A+B. The elements (g)—which denotes futurity—(h)—a participle unit and (i)-indicating the animate plural-are grammatical elements which convey nothing when detached. The formula (0) is intended to imply that the finished word conveys, in addition to what is definitely expressed, a further relational idea, that of subjectivity; in other words, the form can only be used as the subject of a sentence, not in an objective or other syntactic relation. The radical element A ("to cut up"), before entering into combination with the coordinate element B ("to sit"), is itself compounded with two nominal elements or element-groups-an instrumentally used stem (F) ("knife"), which may be freely used as the radical element of noun forms but cannot be employed as an absolute noun in its given form, and an objectively used group—(E)+C+d ("black cow or bull"). This group in turn consists of an adjectival radical element (E) ("black"), which cannot be independently employed..., and the compound noun C+d ("buffalo-pet"). The radical element C properly means "buffalo", but the element d, properly an independently occurring noun meaning "horse" ..., is regularly used as a quasi subordinate element indicating that the animal denoted by the stem to which it is affixed is owned by a human being. It will be observed that the whole complex (F)+(E)+C+d+A+B is functionally no more than a verbal base, corresponding to the *sing*- of an English form like *singing*; that this (g), by the way, must not be understood as appended to B alone, but to the whole basic complex as a unit—and that the elements (h)+(i)+(0)transform the verbal expression into a formally well-defined noun." (Sapir. *Language*. 1921:31-32)

Seuren suggests that linguists, prior to the twentieth century (and even for a long time in the twentieth century), did not draw linguistic structures because of a "social code in the ... Geisteswissenschaften [that] simply forbade any schema or diagram representation." (p187), even though a description such as the above demands very careful reading and is more a handicap than a help to thinking anything complicated about language. We can relate this to very suggestive arguments more recently made concerning the general development in progress towards a more balanced use of different media in information presentation, sometimes referred to as the 'visual turn'.

[quote from van Leeuwen/Kress on monomodality of the establishment and the 19th. century]

Consider the same information as Sapir's analysis instead expressed as a linguistic tree:



The graphical representation allows us to get at the important details of the linguistic unit far more quickly. And, as we shall see more of below, what is crucial is that it invites us to look for **structural configurations**—that is, at reoccurring linguistic patterns about which we can make generalisations

concerning how something in a particular language is working. While of course possible with the textual representation—after all, there was a considerable amount of very good linguistics done prior to the use of diagrams—that good work was really *in spite of* the representation selected and not because of it. Much modern linguistics is concerned with seeing reoccurring patterns, and it is therefore advisable to select representation forms that are maximally supportive of that aim rather than hindering it

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# 6 First Practice at Sentence Structure and Immediate Constituent Analysis

WHAT WE ARE DOING THIS CHAPTER.

In this chapter we set out a range of ways of examining linguistic data, particularly sentences, in order to fit them into the models of structure developed in the previous chapter.

We saw in Chapters 1—3 how there are rather diverse meanings made in texts and in the sentences that make up texts, and these meanings are, somehow, distributed around linguistic units in a way that hearers and readers can, again somehow, recover. We have now also seen in Chapter 4 how different linguistic theories can be treated as maps which set out the territory to be explored. In this chapter, we turn in considerably more detail to the linguistic forms used for capturing meaning. Meanings are complex, and so the structures necessary to carry them can also be complex. We will therefore also use this chapter to begin becoming more sure of our abilities to recognise those parts of sentences that can carry meanings.

Along with the development of the basic parts of speech found in languages begun by the ancient Greeks, then, there has more recently been a similar refinement concerning the kinds of words and sequences that can be grouped together as phrases. This has strengthened our tools for investigating linguistic form beyond all comparison. In particular, we will see a collection of probes and tests for exploring the basic components of sentences. This collection draws primarily on the discovery procedures for grammatical structure worked out by the Bloomfieldian structuralists in their attempts to provide a secure foundation for linguistic description.

These discovery procedures and statements about distribution—i.e., in what context items occur—of elements and their combinations mark the later stages of the progression from simpler reflections about the nature of language structure towards the more systematic application of 'scientific' method. Discovery procedures can be given as a set of tests for interrogating grammatical structure. By applying tests of these kinds, linguists of the 1940s and 50s were able to take apart sentences of any language and to posit the kinds of constituents and phrases that that language possessed, largely independently of any assumptions about what those sentences might mean.

This is an extremely significant result here for two main reasons. First, it can help us decide more effectively how to break up sentences in order to identify the various bits which carry meaning—which is where we left off our practical work at the end of Chapter 3. And second, it can provide a starting point for asking questions about what meanings the various bits carry. As we shall see in a later chapter, structure is there for a reason, so being able to identify the structure without making guesses about what those reasons are places us in a much more powerful position for revealing what language is doing and how it does it.

# 6.1 Breaking up a sentence into parts: tests and probes

As we try and find the significant parts of the sentences that make up a text—whether these be the 'first' elements, the elements to do with the main verb, or the Processes, Participants and Circumstances—we can find cases where the sentences are sufficiently complex that we might not be sure just what belongs to what. As we have seen and will see more in the next chapter, this is a very old problem that people among them linguists-have been trying to understand better ever since paying serious attention to language. There have been very many significant contributions to this area over the centuries, but it is only in the last 50 years or so that the component parts of sentences have really been placed on a firm theoretical footing that allows detailed descriptions of sentences of almost any complexity. One of the results of this work is that there are now a range of reliable tests for taking sentences apart into their 'constituent parts'. To get us started, therefore, we shall simply list some of the more well known tests and then, in the chapter following, we will apply these in the analysis of a longer example.

The probes described here are tests that tell us about grammatical constituents. A grammatical constituent is a grammatical unit that is part of a bigger grammatical unit. Larger constituents are made up of smaller constituents. The largest grammatical constituent that is usually thought of is the sentence, the smallest is the morpheme. The words, whose parts of speech we saw above, are made up out of morphemes. Some words consist of just a single morpheme (e.g., 'but'), others consist of several morphemes (e.g., 'runs' consisting of a morpheme 'run' and a third-person, present tense morpheme '-s'). In this introduction we will not generally be concerned with what happens within words.

Many of the tests are concerned with what you can and cannot do: this means that if you try, for example, to move some part of the sentence that is not a constituent, you will end up with something that is not grammatical English—in linguistics such sentences, or other grammatical units, that are not correct because they violate how English builds sentences, are indicated by placing an asterisk in front of them; for example:

\* This sentence grammatical not is.

Note that the existence of these tests is itself further evidence against the view of language as beads on a string. If language were so structured, then many of the probes given for recognising bits of structure would not work: it is only because language has structure that the probes do their job; they are responding to, or making visible, the linguistic structure. As an analogy, one can look at the tests as in some respects similar to the geologist's hammer: when a rock is hit with the hammer, then it breaks along its natural fault lines to show something of its combination. The grammatical probes and tests are like a range of different kind of hammers, each of which capable of making a distinct kind of fault line visible in the grammatical structure of sentences and clauses.

We now set out the tests with some very short examples; in the next chapter we apply them to some real sentences as found in their natural habitat—i.e., in texts.

# **Types of structure 'probes': subjects**

The following are reliable tests for identifying grammatical Subject:

• the Subject and the finite part of the verb agree in grammatical number

the dog chases the cat

the dogs chase the cat

Agreement is also sometimes called **concord** and in English can be either grammatical or semantic:

'the staff is very well trained' vs. 'the staff are here to help'

• a tag question always picks out the Subject



the dogs chase the cat, don't they?

• if you make a **passive construction** the Subject is always the one to disappear or to be moved to a 'by phrase'; so again in the sentence 'the dog chased the cat' when we make this into a passive construction:

the cat is chased by the dog

the cat is chased

we see that it is the Subject (the phrase concerning the dog) that has had some change occur to it.

**But beware!** What becomes the Subject in a passive construction is *not* always a complete or a simple Participant!! This is particularly the case in clauses that talk about 'mental' or 'verbal' events. For example, in a sentence such as:

He saw his dog chasing a sheep

we can pick out 'his dog chasing a sheep' as a single constituent and we cannot split this constituent up easily by moving it around (try it with the tests below); this would be a Participant. But we can nevertheless make 'his dog' the Subject of a passive sentence:

His dog was seen chasing a sheep.

This is a particular property of both textual and interpersonal meanings that we will see more of later in the course. We need to know both about the constituent structure and the grammatical functions and how those functions can be 'distributed' around the constituent structure in sometimes quite complex ways (but never 'any old how'!).

# Types of structure 'probes': 'semantic constituents'

These are the parts of a sentence that answer the basic questions:

- who?
- where?
- when?
- why?
- how?
- to whom?

There tests are particularly suited to picking out the Participants and Circumstances of a clause.

# **Permutation tests**

Permutation tests are tests where you try and 'move' some part of a sentence around and see what other bits of the sentence want to move too. For example,

Fred Bloggs, author of 6 novels, wrote many books in New Hampshire.

If we try to find the 'first' element of the sentence, then we can see what can be moved where. Whenever we try and move 'Fred Bloggs' or 'author of 6 books' (or to move something in their way), then the other 'half' wants to move to:

\* Fred Bloggs, in New Hampshire, author of 6 novels, wrote many books.

\* Author of 6 novels, many books were written by Fred Bloggs in New Hampshire

But if we keep them together, then they are happy:

Many books were written by *Fred Bloggs, author of 6 novels*, in New Hampshire

When we try and move something to the front of the sentence, then what will be moved is typically a full constituent: e.g.,

In New Hampshire, Fred Bloggs, author of 6 novels, wrote many books.

### **Types of structure 'probes': syntactic constituents**

### Pseudo-clefts ('wh-cleft')

'Cleft' is a word that means to divide in two, or to divide. Cleftsentences are then sentences that have been divided into two parts and in the case of a wh-cleft they have been divided by using a whword such as 'what', 'when', etc. Sentences cannot be divided arbitrarily however, they have natural places where they 'break'. Thus, if you have a sentence:

### The boy kicked the ball

then you can pick out the constituents of the sentence using the **pseudo-cleft** construction:

- (a) what the boy kicked was <u>the ball</u>
- (b)(the one) who kicked the ball was <u>the boy</u>

Cleft-sentences serve to indicate constituents precisely because sentences have structure and so cannot be divided arbitrarily.

#### **Expansions and substitutions**

If you have a sentence:

#### The king of England opened Parliament

then you can pick out constituents by trying to substitute 'smaller' but equivalent units:

- (a) The king opened Parliament
- (b) He opened Parliament
- (c) He worked

In fact, any kind of substitution is useful: if you can replace a sequence of words by another sequence that you are more sure of, then this can be a useful indication of the kind of linguistic unit in question.

# **Reduction/Ellipsis test**

If you have a sentence:

John won't wash the dishes

then you can pick out constituents by seeing what can be 'left out' or ellided:

He will \_\_\_\_\_ if you ask him

Similarly with the sentence:

John won't help me with my homework...

responding to this lets us 'leave out' even more:

# He will help you with your homework if you ask him

that is,

# He will if you ask him.

Again, English (and most languages) are rather particular about what they let you leave out and what not, so that we can use what is left out as another sign of being a constituent.

# Conjunction/Co-ordination test

If you can replace a unit by that unit and another one of a *similar* kind, then you have a constituent:

The boy chased the dog.

The boy chased *the dog and the cat*.

In contrast to this, the sequence of words 'up his friends' in a sentence 'John rang up his friends' is *not* a constituent. We can see this when we try to form a conjoined phrase:

\*John rang <u>up his friend</u> and up his mother.

This does not work because the 'up' here belongs to the phrasal verb 'to ring someone up' and so does not form a constituent with what follows. This is different to when it is used as a regular location Circumstance:

John climbed up the ladder and up the stairs.

# Dependency test

If some words cannot be removed from a sentence or other unit **without taking others out with them** then these latter other words are **dependent on** the former and together with them make up of a larger constituent.

(a) the King of England opened Parliament

(b) the King opened Parliament

(c) \* of England opened Parliament

This tells us that the part of the sentence 'of England' is *dependent* on the part of the sentence 'the King'—if the latter goes, we are left with nonsense, but if the former goes, we still have a complete and grammatical sentence.

# 6.2 Phrase structure

The treatment of linguistic structure took a radical turn with the publication in 1957 of Noam Chomky's *Syntactic Structures*. This slim book took on the task of providing a systematic account of linguistic structures and showed clearly that the simple probes and tests that had been developing in the preceding 20 years of Bloomfieldian structure linguistics were not up to the job of describing human language. Chomsky showed this in two steps: but we will concentrate here on only the first of these; the second (which underlies the account of *Transformational Grammar* that came to dominate linguistics and linguistic teaching throughout the 1960s and beyond) has undergone such a wide ranging series of revisions since then that it is barely recognisable in current day linguistics. The first step was the innovation of 'Phrase Structure Grammar'—a scheme for representing explicitly the kinds of structures that phrases and sentences rely on in order to do their job of representing meanings that Chomsky imported from mathematics and the study of 'formal languages'.

When we consider sequences of words, it is clear that they group together into phrases. This was the basis underlying the substitution tests given in the previous chapter.

•	he	[pronoun]
•	John	[proper name]
•	The boy	[determiner noun]
•	The good boy	[determiner adjective noun]

Observations such as these can be summarised by giving *phrase structure trees* as shown below.



In such trees, each part of the tree is called a *node*. The top of the tree is called the *root node*. Nodes that have other nodes below them are said to *dominate* those lower nodes. The higher node is called the *parent*, or *mother* node, and those below are called the *child*, or *daughter*, nodes. A node that is immediately below another node is said to be *immediately* dominated by the parent node. In these examples, all of the children nodes (for determiners, adjective and nouns) are immediately dominated by the parent node. Finally, whereas the labels of the child nodes are drawn from the familiar word classes that we have seen above, the parent node is a new kind of label, a phrase label, in this case representing a *Noun Phrase*, or *NP* for short. Phrase structure trees let us explicitly group together those parts of a sentence, or other linguistic unit, that belong together.

Part of the value of phrase structure trees is that they make it clear how language *re-uses* certain patterns again and again. This means both that a language is easier to learn and that languages provide a force that generalizes meanings. Particular kinds of meanings are re-used in different situations, thereby providing a way of saying that situations are similar and different in certain respects. Thus, in the following sentence:

• The gnome saw the garden.

We have not one noun phrase but two: both 'the gnome' and 'the garden' have the same kind of phrase structure tree. English re-uses the noun phrase pattern when it (or rather, one of its speakers) wants to describe objects such as gnomes and gardens. Both phrases are said to be *embedded* within the sentence as a whole. We can write the structure of that sentence as something like that shown below.



Here the entire tree is dominated by the root node 'S', standing for Sentence. This node immediately dominates three children: the two NPs and the verb. This makes it clear that we are not dealing with a simple chain consisting of:

# determiner noun verb determiner noun

but with a structure. We cannot move determiners or nouns around at will; if we move anything, then we typically must take an entire phrase: and the phrases correspond to nodes in the tree. Thus 'the garden, the gnome saw' is a reasonable sentence (if somewhat limited in possible applications), whereas 'the saw gnome garden the' is so-called **word salad**: it has destroyed the structural relationships and, with them, any chance of being meaningful.

We can also indicate phrases and their boundaries by using brackets which group together those bits of the sentence that belong together in phrases and exclude those belonging to other phrases:

((the gnome) saw (the garden))

This shows grouping, but does not show the kinds of phrases involved. A way of writing the information that is completely equivalent to the tree is then to use *labelled brackets* as follows.

# $(_{s}(_{NP} \text{ the gnome}) \text{ saw } (_{NP} \text{ the garden}))$

This shows both the grouping and the syntactic labels. From any tree we can write a sequence of words or word classes using labelled brackets; and from any sequence using labelled brackets we can write a tree. The two forms are interchangeable; which is used depends on how clearly the form selected shows the grouping that we want to talk about. Sometimes labelled brackets are enough; sometimes it is more useful to see the entire tree set out graphically.

There are several distinct kinds of phrases. The following is an **Adverbial Phrase** (or AdvP):

• very quickly indeed

while the following is an example of a **Prepositional Phrase**, or *PP* for short:

• in the garden

Note that if we were to represent this latter as a simple sequence of word classes such as:

preposition determiner noun

then we would be missing the fact that we have seen some of this kind of structure before: it is not an accident that we again have the sequence 'determiner noun'. This type of pattern occurs both here and in the examples above; this, as we have seen, is a noun phrase. Rather than miss this detail, we can usefully describe prepositional phrases not as this simple sequence but instead in terms of the tree:



or, alternatively, as the labelled bracket expression:

 $(_{PP} preposition (_{NP} determiner noun))$ 

A prepositional phrase is therefore made up of a preposition followed by a noun phrase: or, in terms of our tree, a PP immediately dominates a preposition followed by an NP. This representation captures the fact that it is not an accident that after the preposition we can put any possible noun phrase in English, not just a sequence of determiner followed by a noun: we can substitute any NP. The tree makes the substitutions that are possible at this point in structure explicit: in fact, we can say that it is because English (and many other languages) structures a prepositional phrase like this that the substitution tests we saw above involving prepositional phases work at all.

Now consider the following example:

• The boy in the garden

Again, were we to represent this just as a sequence of word classes:

# determiner noun preposition determiner noun

we would miss much of the structure that is involved and end up doing more work than is necessary. This chain representation misses the fact that the first two words of the phrase and the last two words have something in common: they are both very similar to noun phrases. It also misses the fact that the phrase as a whole—the boy in the garden—can occur everywhere that a simple noun phrase can occur: that is because it *is* a kind of noun phrase. So one way of capturing these observations would again be in terms of a phrase structure; one possible phrase structure tree would be:



Now, this quite complicated structure shows no less than three NPs participating; whether we actually decide that such a structure is the most revealing for this phrase or not, the structure shown is one possible treatment. We will return to such issues below, where we ask just what *kinds* of structures do we want to pursue in our linguistic descriptions. This question can only be asked sensibly when we are more clear about just what 'work' the linguistic structure is meant to be doing for us. At present, the main work being asked of such structures is that they show us the constituency structure and that they group the sequences of words that we see or hear according to their natural phrases. From this perspective, a structure such as this one is certainly not a bad attempt.

This last structure also shows a further aspect of language that is absolutely crucial for how language works. It includes phrases that contain other phrases of the same kind within them: that is, the topmost NP includes other NPs within it. When we have structures of this kind, we have examples of a special kind of embedding called **recursion.** We will see that recursion is one of the most important features of linguistic structures and that without recursion human language would not be possible. This is a very long way indeed from the notion of language made up of chains of words: so much so that it often takes considerable practise to become comfortable with it. But the effort is worth it; once structure has been understood, many properties of language become easier to grasp and use.

We can now apply again the probes and tests for structure that we saw in above in order to refine our view of structure. Examining what these probes tell us, and exploring a wider range of sentences as they occur in texts, we quickly find the need for a more richly organised view of sentences and their constituents than we have so far seen illustrated. Consider again, for



example, our tree for a simple sentence given above and repeated here on the right for convenience. In fact, this tree is still giving too much of a simple chain view of language: in this case a chain consisting of a noun phrase followed by a verb followed by another noun phrase. If we apply our conjunction tests asking what parts of the sentence can be combined with 'and' so as to form bigger units

of the 'same kind', then we get a several structures. We certainly get all of the constituents that we can see in the tree: e.g.,

<u>The gnome</u> saw the garden : The gnome and the dwarf saw the garden

The gnome saw the garden : The gnome saw the garden and the mountain.

The gnome <u>saw</u> the garden : The gnome saw and loved the garden.

But we also have sentences such as the following:

The gnome saw the garden and ran to it.

The gnome saw the garden and waited for sunrise.

According to our probes this should then mean that there is another constituent present in the sentence, a constituent identified as the sequence of elements underlined in the following:

The gnome saw the garden

We can also find evidence supporting this from the substitution probes. If we examine what constituents can be substituted for in this sentence we find combinations such as:

The dwarf saw the garden and the gnome did too.

Here the 'did' appears to be substituting just for the portion underlined above: i.e., 'saw the garden'. All of the tests in fact appear to provide evidence that there is another constituent, and that a more complete structure for the sentence would be not as given above but instead one that can be shown as:



This additional node, the VP, is the **verb phrase**. We can see with this structure a return to the kind of basic division between Subject and Predicate that was developed by the ancient Greeks. Indeed, some linguists have always assumed that this division is basic and obvious; Bloomfield, for example, wrote:

"Any English speaking person ... is sure to tell us that the immediate constituents of *Poor John ran away* are the two forms *Poor John* and *ran away*; that each of these is, in turn, a complex form." (*Language*, 1933, p161)

Whether we believe this or not probably depends on how much linguistic 'indoctrination' we have already received! But fortunately, we do not just have to believe it, i.e., take it on faith, we can instead, by following the probes and tests above, arrive at a similar conclusion ourselves—without resorting to 'belief'. There is ample evidence that there is something that is acting like a constituent in the place that we have now placed a VP node in our syntax tree. This then allows us to produce sentence structures such the following, which are necessary to cover the cases of conjoining (by means of some conjunction such as 'and') shown above:



We can take this line of argument considerably further—and linguists have. In fact, there is evidence for *considerably* more structure than we have seen here; but we will leave it at that for now.

#### Reading and references

The tests and probes talked about here are mostly compiled from

- Wagner, Karl-Heinz (and Susanne Hackmack) Grundkurs-Skript Sprachwissenschaft, Uni Bremen. 1996.
- Wells, R. S, (1947). Immediate constituents. Language, 23, 81--117.
- Glinz, H., (1965). Grundbegriffe und Methoden inhaltbezogener Text- und Sprachanalyse.
- Chomsky, N. (1957) Syntactic Structures. Mouton.
- Vater, *Einfürhung in die Linguistik*. (also taken from Wells in any case I think).

# 7 A longer, contrastive example of sentence structure analyses: the Telecom texts

WHAT WE ARE DOING THIS CHAPTER.

We bring our first detailed look at sentence structure analysis and its interpretation to a close with a contrastive analysis of two, quite difficult texts drawn from newspapers with contrasting ideological orientations. With our now widened view of how to recognise the parts of sentences, we can embark on a more complex example of transitivity analysis. We will consider two longer contrasting articles—those concerned with the Australian Telecom strike from which we took two introductory sentences above. These articles are taken from two newspapers with rather different readerships.

#### Text 1 From the Age

Industrial disputes

#### **TELECOM STRIKE THREAT**

1 Telecom employees are likely to reimpose work bans or strike within a week unless their demands are met on pay negotiations.

2 The federal executive of the 26,000-member Australian Telecommunications Employees Association drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign after a seven-hour meeting yesterday.

3 The recommendations will be put to members in Sydney today, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow, and in Melbourne next Tuesday.

4 Action could be taken as early as tomorrow or Friday, because the executive could then have the necessary support of three States and a majority of members.

5 The executive is also seeking rankand-file support to withdraw from Arbitration Commission Full Bench hearings on the union's wage claim.

6 The plans for industrial action and a boycott on bench hearings would be put into effect unless the union gets 'genuine' wage negotiations with Telecom.

7 The union's assistant federal secretary, Mr Mick Musumeci, said last night the Federal Goernment's 'phantom' industrial co-ordinating committee had prevented Telecom from negotiating freely on the side of wage increases.

8 Negotiations before Arbitration Commissioner E. J. Clarkson broke down last week after Telecom had offered a \$7 increase.

9 The union is seeking about \$20.10 Commissioner Clarkson referred the talks to the Full Bench last Monday to set an arbitrary increase.

#### WORK BANS

11 The ATEA, hearing that the bench would award a rise of only about \$8, failed to persuade the bench to send the parties back to the negotiating table with Commissioner Clarkson.

12 The bench is due to sit again next Wednesday.

13 The union imposed work bans in June in support of its original 20 per cent pay claim, causing widespread disruption to national telecommunications.

14 The bans took about three weeks to have a serious effect, because breakdowns in the system were gradual.

15 Mr Musumeci said last night he expected that members would support the recommendation.

16 He claimed the settlement terms of the June-July dispute had been flouted by Telecom's limited negotiating ability.

17 Telecom had also failed to give proper recognition to comparative wage rates in private enterprise when studying ways of applying increases.

TV men vote to stay on strike

18 There is no end in sight to the 13-day-old strike by commercial television production workers.
#### PHONE CHAOS LIKELY NEXT WEEK

#### TV strike continues

1 Industrial action seems certain to hit the nation's telecommunications network from early next week.

2 Effects will be felt in South Australia – where more than 2500 Telecom workers will meet tomorrow.

3 Most likely action is bans on new business phone installations, bans on maintenance and bans on repairs to call-recording equipment.

4 In Sydney today a meeting of striking television production workers voted to continue their strike and meet again at mid-day tomorrow.

5 The meeting was told the deputy president of the Arbitration Commission, Mr Justice Robinson, had called for a compulsory conference of all parties in Melbourne this afternoon.

6 The Professional Radio and Electronics Institute, whose members have been working throughout the strike, have called for a meeting tomorrow where an executive recommendation for a 24-hour stoppage will be put.

7 Adelaide Telecom workers, members of the Australian Telecommunications Employees' Association, will meet at the Dom Polski Centre, Angas St at 12.15 pm tomorrow.

8 They are upset at a decision to refer their claim for a 20 per cent

wage rise to the Arbitration Commission.

9 The union's federal executive met in Melbourne yesterday and decided on mass meetings throughout the nation to back a protest campaign of industrial action.

10 A final decision which rests largely with meetings in Melbourne and Sydney during the next two days, will be decided by an aggregate vote of members.

11 The workers are expected to be asked to endorse immediate industrial action if Telecom refuses to negotiate on their wage demands.

12 The dispute has been brewing for some months, with protracted negotiations between the union and Telecom failing to find common ground.

#### HEARING

13 The dispute apart from hitting telephone services, especially STD calls, could also hit telex operations and data processing systems.

14 The Full Bench hearing is expected to be held from next week, and already it has warned the union it could forfeit backpay on its demands if it takes industrial action.

We will illustrate some of the more complicated sentences in these texts and show the Process, Participants and Circumstances as the writers have selected them. With these texts are some quite difficult sentences; this is real language as it happens without any simplifications to protect the beginner! We will need, therefore, to start practising a range of techniques to be sure that we have correctly identified the component parts of each sentence—in particular, we can employ our tests and probes from the previous section. We will pick out some particularly problematic ones and deal with them in sequence. Some of these sentences are sufficiently complex that we may not always be able to come to a "one and true' analysis! The discussion should give you a good indication of the kinds of considerations that you need to bring to bear. If you can rule out all of the analyses that are simply not possible linguistically, then that is already a major advance. In short, while sometimes there may not be a single correct answer, there *are* very many answers which are quite simply wrong! It is then necessary to practise analysis, using the tools and methods that linguistics provides, in order to rule out the wrong analyses and to focus on the interesting problems still raised by possibly correct analyses.

# • The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign after a seven-hour meeting yesterday

Here we can first employ our dependency tests to get a sense of which parts belong together. We can see, for example, that 'federal' can be removed freely while 'executive' cannot:

The <del>federal</del> executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign after a seven-hour meeting yesterday

\* The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign after a seven-hour meeting yesterday

Similarly 'of the 26,000-member ATEA' can be removed freely but 'executive' must stay. Also, we can remove 'for a fresh industrial campaign' but not 'plan':

The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign after a seven-hour meeting yesterday

\* The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up <del>a plan</del>-for a fresh industrial campaign-after a seven-hour meeting yesterday

'after a seven-hour meeting' and 'yesterday' can both be removed, independently and together, without effecting the rest of the sentence:

The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign-after a seven-hour meeting yesterday

And both elements can be freely moved, for example, to the beginning of the sentence as follows (permutation):

After a seven-hour meeting the federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign yesterday.

Yesterday the federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign after a seven-hour meeting

And we cannot group 'up' with 'a plan' no matter how we try (e.g., pseudocleft and conjunction): \* What the federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew after a seven-hour meeting yesterday was up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign

\* The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign *and up a new resolution* after a seven-hour meeting yesterday

This contrasts with the following sentences which are both perfectly acceptable:

*What* the federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up after a seven-hour meeting yesterday *was* a plan for a fresh industrial campaign

The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign *and a new resolution* after a seven-hour meeting yesterday

Finally we can employ our reduction and simplification strategy together with dependency to come to the simplest view of the sentence:

The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign after a seven-hour meeting yesterday  $\rightarrow$ 

The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA drew up a plan for a fresh industrial campaign after a seven-hour meeting yesterday  $\rightarrow$ 

The executive drew up a plan after a seven-hour meeting yesterday (sometime)  $\rightarrow$ 

Someone drew up something sometime

And this is the basic Process ('drew up'), Participants ('those who drew up' and 'what got drawn up'), and Circumstances ('when') structure of this sentence; that is:

Process	Participants	Circumstances
drew up	The federal executive of the 26,000-member ATEA	after a seven-hour meeting yesterday
	a plan for a fresh industrial campaign	

As usual with real sentences, there is considerable further detail inside the Participants and Circumstances here, but we will return to deal with this later.

• The executive could then have the necessary support of three States and a majority of members.

Here again we can apply our test for dependency in order to get an overview of the likely grammatical constituents. The only complicated unit(s) is/are those after the 'have': we need to be able to decide how many constituents are there that are relevant for the Process, Participant and Circumstance decision. Dependency quickly tells us that 'necessary' is dependent on 'support', as is the phrase 'of three states...'. We can also see that 'three States' and 'a majority of members' are being conjoined with *and* and are therefore themselves individual grammatical constituents that combined into one larger unit of the same kind. Within these 'three' is dependent on 'States'. For the sentence as a whole, 'then' can be removed without problems, indicating a Circumstance, while the other units need to remain.

This give us a basic structure as follows:

Process	Participants	Circumstances
could have	The executive	then
	the necessary support of three States and a majority of members.	

Of some interest here is that the dependency tests do not give us a clear indication of the relationships in the constituent 'a majority of members'. We could choose to leave out 'of members' and have the acceptable:

the necessary support of three States and a majority

But we could just as well choose to leave out 'a majority of' and have the equally acceptable:

the necessary support of three States and members.

Some analysts might argue for one of these as being the 'correct' analysis; others might argue for the other. This occasionally occurs with the dependency argument: opinions differ. Both views have some aspect of the truth in them—which is a good reason for seeking descriptions that bring out the best of both worlds rather than ruling one of those out.

# • A final decision rests largely with meetings in Melbourne and Sydney during the next two days.

The main decision with this sentence is with the phrases 'in Melbourne and Sydney during the next two days'. These look like the kinds of units we have seen above described as Circumstances. And indeed, we can leave them out here:

A final decision rests largely with meetings

But this is not yet enough to decide if they are Circumstances, since we have not yet distinguished between these phrases being dependent on the sentence as a whole (or on the main verb of the sentence 'rests') or on the phrase 'meetings'. This is an example where we then need to use some further tests, for example the pseudo-cleft test. Applying this gives the following kinds of sentences.

Where and when a final decision rests largely with meetings is in Melbourne and Sydney during the next two days.

What a final decision rests largely with is meetings in Melbourne and Sydney during the next two days.

The first sentence is the kind of sentence that we would need if we wish to make 'in Melbourne and Sydney' into Circumstances. This is because only in this case are these locations associated directly with the Process of the sentence. If in our understanding of the sentence this is the case, then the first probe sentence should be natural and acceptable to us.

The second sentence, however, would show that the locations and times are not Circumstances of the Process of 'resting with' at all, but are further specifications of the 'meetings'—i.e., they say where and when the meetings will be.

There are other clues that this latter interpretation is the one that is correct. If we try the permutation test and try moving the times and places around, the results are rather odd:

In Melbourne and Sydney during the next two days a final decision rests largely with meetings

Process	Participants	Circumstances
rests with	a final decision	
	meetings in Melbourne and Sydney during the next two days.	

This oddness again suggests that the times and places are not Circumstances for 'resting'. And so we have the analysis:

Note also here that we have an unusual Process, one with a 'with' preposition in it. This often occurs in two particular kinds of clause: one would involve a 'phrasal verb' construction for 'rest with', another would say that 'rest with something' has a similar structure to the construction 'to be with something', i.e., a clause describing not some action but more of a relationship. In both cases, we have two constituents that both function as Participants. We can see that both of these function as Participants because we cannot leave any of them out without destroying the sentence:

- \* A final decision rests
- \* rests with meetings...

The 'resting' in the present example actually describes a relationship that associated the final decision with the meetings rather than an event (which we could see from further, more sophisticated probes and tests that fall under the grammatical area of *transitivity*). This would then favour an interpretation without the phrasal verb, which is good in that we would not then need to also think of phrasal verbs such as 'rest on': there would be a single relationship process 'rest' and a range of relationships with participants. However, for now, we can adopt either. There is a further note on phrasal verbs below.

# • The recommendations will be put to members in Sydney today, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow, and in Melbourne next Tuesday.

Here we have a similar decision to make for the location and time phrases: on what do the phrases 'in Sydney today', 'in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow' and 'in Melbourne next Tuesday' depend? Lets try the same tests as before:

### **Pseudo-cleft:**

- (a) Where and when recommendations will be put to members is in Sydney today, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow, and in Melbourne next Tuesday.
- (b) Who the recommendations will be put to are members in Sydney today, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow, and in Melbourne next Tuesday.

#### **Permutation**:

- (a) In Sydney today, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow, and in Melbourne next Tuesday the recommendations will be put to members.
- (b) To members in Sydney today, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow, and in Melbourne next Tuesday the recommendations will be put.

We can also try 'undoing' the passive and trying permutations:

(a) In Sydney today, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow, and in Melbourne next Tuesday someone will put the recommendations to members. (b) To members in Sydney today, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow, and in Melbourne next Tuesday someone will put the recommendations.

The situation is certainly much less clear-cut than in the previous example. All of these sentences are probably acceptable: the question is which of their interpretations do we feel to come nearest to the force of the original. In all of the (b) sentence, the locations and times are being associated most strongly with the 'members'—i.e., they are not Circumstances of the sentence as a whole but serve instead to provide further information about one of the Participants: the members. In all of the (a) sentences, the locations and times are being referred to the event being described—i.e., the 'putting of the recommendations'—and so are in this case Circumstances.

This is a clear case of an **ambiguity** that is difficult to resolve without further consideration—i.e., there are (at least) two different structures that *could* describe what the sentence at hand, which makes the sentence structurally ambiguous, and it is not obvious which one is meant. In this case, we are lucky: the difference in interpretation does not appear to make too much difference. We will see below many examples where ambiguity can make a big difference in meaning however. For what its worth, my own feeling for the sentences is that 'putting to members' is almost a stock phrase in the language of Trade Unions, and so almost belongs to the verb. The times and locations then refer to the times and locations of this 'putting to members' rather than to the times and locations of where the members are—that is, the (a) sentences feel to me to be more natural.

But we can also try a more complicated analysis, and separate the times and places: saying that the places are most closely related to the members—i.e., they identify where the members are—while the times identify when the putting to members takes place. Only the latter would then be Circumstances. Applying our tests for this interpretation gives sentences such as:

- (a) Today, tomorrow, and next Tuesday the recommendations will be put to members in Sydney, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart, and in Melbourne (respectively).
- (b) To members in Sydney, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart, and in Melbourne the recommendations will be put today, tomorrow and next Tuesday.

Which are in many respects better than the sentences we got with our previous tests. This may well be what is going on in this sentence. However, this means that we have a substantially more complicated structure on our hands: it is not usually possible to have a string of alternating bits of Participants and Circumstances, *unless* several clauses are being combined together. Thus our analysis instead of being the simple:

Process	Participants	Circumstances
will be put (to members)	the recommendations	in Sydney today, in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart tomorrow, and in Melbourne
		next Tuesday

may need to consider the sentence as three sentences combined together only in this way can we get the separate Circumstances and Participants as we require; i.e.:

Process	Participants	Circumstances
will be put	the recommendations	today
(will be put)	to members in Sydney	tomorrow,
(will be put)	(to members) in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart	next Tuesday
	(to members) in Melbourne	

In this case, we would have a very good example of the way in which *textual* meanings—as these are involved in the combination of the separate events into a single composite event for the purpose of the present text—can override many of the rules of simple constituency. We will see more of this later in the course.

This complicated example illustrates an important principle: it is often more important to consider the different *possibilities* for analysis than to come up with a single 'correct' answer. Often each of the different possibilities improves our understanding and reading of a text: trying to find the single correct answer can serve to reduce our understanding of the complexities involved in a text. This is not to mean, however, that anything goes! There will also be many analyses that are simply wrong; the skill to be learnt is to separate out these from those which remain.

For examples that we are not sure of, we can always push further and try to find similar examples that shed more light on the case at hand. This is most effectively done by doing what is called **grammatical reasoning**: that is, we try and reason from how the grammatical structure (and similar structures from similar appearing examples) behaves and let this guide our interpretation. In order then, finally, to illustrate how we might argue for one of the interpretations here rather than the other, we can try the same grammatical structure with different Processes, Participants and Circumstances to see if the variations behave in the same way. So, let's take an example which *forces* us to adopt the second analysis above, the one where the locations are not Circumstances of the clause(s) at all, but are instead modifiers of the Participants. This is relatively easy to do; for example:

I will eat the cake in the box today, the cake in the fridge tomorrow, and the cake in the freezer next Tuesday.

Here we have no trouble sorting out what is going on because we can appeal to real-world knowledge that it is unlikely to want to eat the cake while sitting in the freezer (although this is not impossible: the clause is still *structurally and formally* ambiguous if not in practice!). Now, with this similar example, we try placing it in a passive construction in the same way as our original sentence above. This yields a sentence such as:

The cake will be eaten (by me) in the box today, in the fridge tomorrow, and in the freezer next Tuesday.

This should be seen as a very strange sentence. It is strange precisely because it does not allow the interpretation we wanted—this structure insists that both the times and the locations are Circumstances of the Process. This particular cake that we are talking about is going to be eaten at different times and at different places over the coming week. This gives us very strong evidence that this particular grammatical structure is not going to be compatible with an interpretation where the locations are part of the Participants. If the grammatical structure does not like this kind of interpretation for the invented example, there is no particular reason why it should behave differently for the original example—regardless of how we might try to *think* it might be interpreted. The only difference is in fact that in one case our intuitions are clear, in the other case not. It is then the job of being linguistically (in this case grammatically) systematic in order to achieve clarity when our intuitions fail to deliver.

# • Most likely action is bans on new business phone installations, bans on maintenance and bans on repairs to call-recording equipment.

This sentence is also quite tricky but for a different reason: it uses a style of newspaper language that is quite common. It is slightly 'telegraphic' and is short for a more usual variant: 'the most likely action is bans...'. We can see this by applying, for example, the test of leaving something out—if 'most likely' were a Circumstance then it should be possible to leave it out: but this gives us, \* action is bans on new business phone installations, bans on maintenance and bans on repairs to call-recording equipment.

which is quite bad. This suggests that there is some relationship between 'most likely' and 'action'. The sentence is even more misleading than normal because it is very closely related to similar sentences such as:

The action is most likely to be bans on new business phone installations, bans on maintenance and bans on repairs to call-recording equipment.

Where the 'most likely' is modifying how likely we think that the action is going to be what we say it is; 'most likely' is in this case certainly functioning as a separate Circumstance (try some of the tests). But in the individual sentence we cannot extract the 'most likely' out of its position in front of the 'actions'. This is also because of the fact that 'most likely' is standing in for the missing 'the': without *anything* in front of the noun 'action' we get a very bad sounding phrase indeed.

This example is also a further good illustration for a property of *interpersonal* meanings that we passed over quickly above in our tests for Subject: interpersonal meanings can move around quite freely within the structure of a clause. The assessment of likelihood can appear as a Circumstance, but here it also appears within the Participant 'actions'. This is a *choice* of the writer/speaker, and each such choice has slightly different effects for how a text as a whole is being structured, how explicit the assessment is being made, who has responsibility for the assessment and so on. We will see more of these interpersonal meanings later in the course.

Process	Participants	Circumstances
is	most likely actions	
	bans on new business phone installations, bans on maintenance and bans on repairs to call- recording equipment	

## A note on phrasal verbs

As you will have seen in several of the sentences in these examples and in the example texts, there are sometimes questions as to whether a particular word belongs to the verb or not: that is, do we simply 'decide', or do we 'decide on' something, or do we 'draw' or do we 'draw up' something. When we have a verb that is made up of a word and a further 'particle' (typically a preposition), then we have a phrasal verb and we need to analyse both parts as belonging to the Process. A phrasal verb should always have its own meaning quite distinct from the individual meaning we would take if we took the verb and the preposition separately: thus, we cannot from the words 'ring' and 'up' deduce that 'ring up' has something to do with telephoning. The phrasal verb has its own independent meaning. And this is why we analyse it as a single unit making up a Process. We can often tell phrasal verbs from ordinary verbs by asking if we can find other prepositions that we could substitute without changing the meaning particularly—naturally any change has an effect on the meaning, but we are looking for substantial changes, of the kind seen when we move from 'ringing' and 'telephoning'. If in doubt whether something is a phrasal verb or not, then it is usually safer to assume that it is *not* and to adopt a separate Process with a Circumstance analysis. There are dictionaries of phrasal verbs which can sometimes help if you are not sure; also, if you do not know the phrasal verb in question, the meaning of a sentence may well seem strange, since it is not relying on the literal meaning of the individual words in question.

Now, having done all of the analysis and dividing into parts that the above lead us to, what does it tell us? What does this allow us to say about the two Telecom texts?

A description of the Processes, Participants and Circumstances in a text—or, more exactly expressed, a description of what the speaker/writer has *chosen* to put into the Participants, Circumstances and Process of his or her text—tells what kind of world the text is creating. This means we can see what kind of objects, individuals, and groups there are, what kinds of actions particular kinds of objects undertake, and what kinds of circumstances those actions take place in. All of these are essential indicators of what a text means.

The transitivity analysis of the first sections of the two Telecom texts is summarised in the two tables below. Also shown in these tables are the choices that the writer made for grammatical Subject—i.e., who or what is considered 'responsible' or 'most at risk' for the information being presented. The form of both tables is the same: the two primary participants in each clause (approximately!) are given: these are the main actor and the one or thing that gets acted on, or the main object which receives an attribute (e.g., *they*[Participant: be-er] *are*[process] *upset* [Participant: attribute]). As mentioned above, transitivity analysis typically divides the Participants and Circumstances up into several different kinds—this tells us far more about how texts are working—but we will not discuss this in detail here. The tables show which of

the Participants has been selected as the Subject of their clauses by pointing with an arrow. This emphasises that fact that the choice of Subject is really a choice: i.e., the writer decides which of the available Participants in the clause to make the Subject; different choices would make different texts.

Participant: Actor,	Subject	Participant:Acted on,	Process
Be-er		Attribute	
Telecom —	<b>→</b>	work bans	impose, strike
employees			
	▲	their demands	met
executive —	<b>→</b>	a plan	drew up
		recommendations	put to
		members	
	•	action	be taken
executive —		necessary support	have
executive —	<b>→</b>	rank-and-file support	seeking
	•	plans and boycott	put into effect
the union —	<b>→</b>	'genuine' negotiation	gets
the union's —			said
secretary			
committee —	<b>→</b>	Telecom	prevent
negotiations —	<b>→</b>		broke down
Telecom —	<b>→</b>	increase	offer
the union —		\$20	seeking
Commissioner –	<b>→</b>	the talks	referred
Clarkson			

Telecom text 1: from 'The Age'

Telecom text 2: from 'The News'

Participant: Actor,	Subject	Participant:Acted on,	Process
Be-er		Attribute	
industrial action	<b>→</b>	nation's network	hit
	•	effects	felt
2500 workers	<b>→</b>		meet
most likely action	<b>→</b>	bans, bans and bans	is
a meeting	<b>→</b>	their strike	vote to
			continue
	•	the meeting	was told
the deputy		conference	called for
president			
the PREI	<b>→</b>	meeting	called for
	•	executive	will be put

		recommendation	
Adelaide Telecom	<b>→</b>		meet
workers			
they		upset	are
union's federal —	<b>→</b>		meet
executive			
an aggregate vote	•	a final decision	decide
	•	the workers	expected
Telecom —	<b>→</b>		refuses
the dispute —	<b>→</b>		brewing

Comparing the two we can note several things.

First, let's compare the kinds of things that are Participants in the two texts. The Participants of the first text are:

Telecom employees, executive (3 times), the union (twice), the union's secretary, committee, negotiation (twice), Telecom (twice), Commissioner Clarkson, work bans, demands, plans, recommendations, members, action, support (twice), increase, \$20, talks

and the Participants of the second text are.

industrial action, workers (4 times), meeting (3 times), deputy president, PREI, executive (3 times), Telecom, dispute, nation's network, effects, bans (3 times), strike, recommendation, upset, decision.

Some of these Participants occur in both texts (they are, after all, about the same events and so this would be expected); but some of them do *not* occur in both texts however. We set out in the following table the Participants that occur in just one of the two texts, showing this for both texts. Asking what kinds of objects are being referred to already tells us a lot about the flavour of the two texts under analysis. Essentially, text 1 is concerned with a world in which there are unions consisting of employees and committees that have negotiations and talks and which make demands and plans—there are increases and money. Although superficially about the same topic, in text 2 there are instead workers who have meetings, come to decisions and vote for things, but there are also disputes and strikes which have effects and people get upset. These differences are not random but reflect different ideological slants on the issues being reported.

Text 1	Text 2
Telecom employees	workers (4 times),

the union	meeting
the union's secretary (Mr. Mick Musumeci)	deputy president (of Arbitration Committee: Mr. Justice Robinson)
committee	Professional Radio and Electronics Institute
negotiation	dispute
Arbitration Commissioner Clarkson	nation's network
demands	effects
plans	strike
members	upset
support	decision
increase	
\$20	
talks	

The first text presents more a world in which there are industrial actions, pay negotiations and demands and talks; the second text there is more inherent generalised conflict. There are strikes, disputes and effects in a similar way to there is bad weather or natural disasters; note how the first sentence of the second text could be used for an encroaching hurricane with very little change:

Hurricane George seems certain to hit the nation's west coast early next week.

This is not possible with the corresponding opening sentence from Text 1 because in that text there are specific doers and actors involved which do not let themselves be read as 'generalised danger'. This theme is continued in sentence 12 of text 2 which states that:

The dispute has been brewing for some months...'

where here again there is a 'generalised danger or problem' mentioned in the 'the dispute' rather than specifics. The workers and their meetings, strikes, and decisions are not effectively brought together with this generalised danger in the second text: this can be also be seen from the selections that the writer made for the Processes. These are again rather general with everyday word selections: 'get', 'meet', 'call for', 'told', a few more 'poetic' choices 'hit' and 'brewing', and a couple of more union-like terms such as 'vote', 'put to' and, borderline, 'decide'. When we look at the more union-like terms where the writer would

have at least had the chance to attribute responsibilities for actions, we find instead that precisely these are used either in passive sentences:

a final decision will be decided by aggregate vote

or by a more anonymous group:

a meeting ... will vote to continue their strike

The information concerning who is doing some action is (sometimes) recoverable from elsewhere in the sentence, but it is not being selected as the Participant that would indicate *linguistically* what is going on. This is in stark contrast to the first text, where there are several Process choices that clearly construct the actions and events in the world of industrial relations—e.g., 'strike', 'seeking' (as in 'seeking a settlement', 'seeking a 10% pay rise'), 'offer' (as in 'the management offers 20%'), and 'put to' (as in 'will be put to members'). All of these Processes have quite definite, nongeneralised actors in text 1—the selection of Participants (and of Subject) makes it clear *linguistically* who is doing what and who is being attributed responsibility for what.

These generalised meanings leave an impression over and above the individual events and states described; that is, even though workers and votes and meetings are mentioned in text 2, they occur in places that *cumulatively* devalue this industrial relations aspect of the meaning that is being made. The choices made in text 1 are quite different. Often it is precisely the cumulative effect that determines how the text is perceived, the impressions it gives, and how it is recalled afterwards.

As another example of this cumulative effect, we can also note something useful about the *forms* selected for the Processes in the two texts. Just picking these out gives us two lists as shown in the following table.

Text 1	Text 2
are likely to reimpose	seems certain to hit
drew up	will be felt
will be put to	will meet
could be taken	is
could then have	voted to continue
is seeking	was told
would be put	had called
gets	have been working
said	have called
had prevented	will be put

broke down	will meet
is seeking	are
referred	met
would award	decided
failed to persuade	rests with
is due to sit	will be decided
imposed, took, were,	are expected to be
said, expected, had	asked, refuses to
been flouted, had failed	negotiate.

This listing in fact demonstrates that the selection between the two forms 'are likely to reimpose' and 'seems certain to hit' that we discussed earlier is not random or lacking in consequences for the texts as a whole: they are *part of* those choices and play their role in contributing to the meaning of the complete texts. 'Are like to reimpose' means that something is being stated as a direct fact—what is being stated is a likelihood of industrial action. This might be rephrased as: 'It is a possibility that Telecom employees will reimpose bans, etc.' The rest of the text then continues to express this *possibility* by employing conditional forms such as *would* and *could* (each one twice). In text 2 the opening sentence means instead something like: 'It seems (to us) certain that...', or alternatively: "We think it is certain that...". And again the rest of the text continues to express this certainty by selecting in every case simple *future tense* for possible actions in the future instead of invoking any conditionality; only in the last section of the text ('Hearing') does the text change its style dramatically and employ 'could'. So the general flavour of the two texts is again in this respect different: Text 1 is describing a possibility and uses 'would' and 'could' for future actions, making those actions dependent on the direct results of negotiation and interaction between those involved in the process of industrial relations; Text 2 is describing a certainty and uses simple future tense for actions that are often quite general, or with 'fuzzy' responsibility (e.g., a 'meeting').

As a final point, you could ask yourselves in what kind of newspapers the two articles would be most 'at home'. For you can be sure that the results of the analysis we have just done are not unique and individual to these two texts—the kinds of meanings that have been made visible or hidden in the two texts will reflect systematic choices that the articles in the two newspapers will repeat, article after article. You can also ask what effects this then might have on prolonged exposure or reading of one form of text rather than the other...

This detailed discussion of the two texts is meant to give you an idea of what starts coming out of a text analysis when we start examining texts systematically, looking at those places in the texts where particular kinds of meaning can and must be made. We could take this analysis considerably further, but that is probably enough to give you a general idea both of transitivity analysis and how that analysis starts making contact with other kinds of analysis—e.g., in the comments about Subjects and responsibilities. You could also note that the Theme choices, i.e., what is placed at the beginning of the sentences in the two texts is *also* different. This is quite usual; the complete meaning of a text is not to be found in any one specific kind of analysis—it is generally precisely the *combination* of different modes of analysis that provides the most insight.

## Reading and references

The Telecom texts and the preliminary discussion (the analysis here is considerably more detailed however) come from:

G. Kress. "Linguistic and ideological transformations in news reporting." *Language, Image, Media*. Davis, Howard, and Paul Walton (eds.) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983. 120--138.

Other interesting discussions and introductions to this kind of 'transformation' of the world according to various ideologies are presented in:

Trew, T. (1979). `What the papers say': linguistic variation and ideological difference. In *Language and control* (R. Fowler, B. Hodge, G. Kress & T. Trew, Eds.) (pp117--156). London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul.