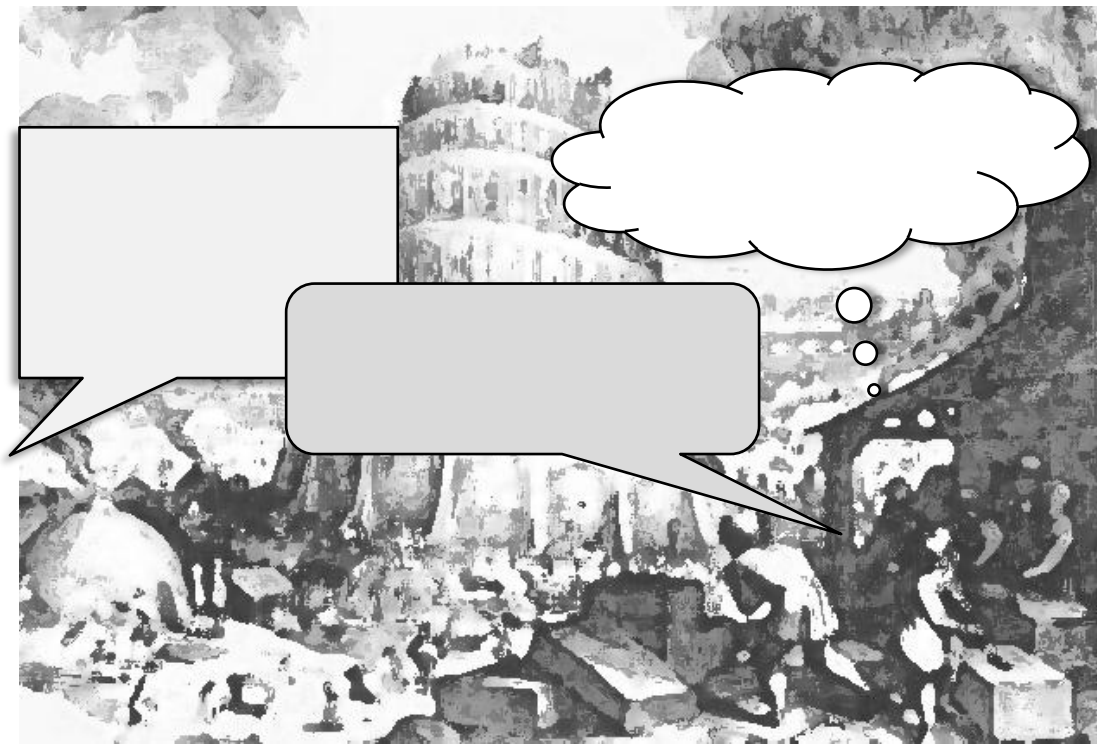# Beginning Linguistics

**English Department
University of Bern**

Franz Andres Morrissey

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1 What is Language? What is Linguistics?

1.1 Considering Language

1.1.1 Some basic considerations

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, amongst others, defines linguistics as "the study of language", which raises the question, "what is language?" This looks like a simple enough question, but the trouble is that the answer is rather complex – and quite elusive. Many great minds have tried and found one or several answers, but they usually have the same drawback: they covered one or a number of aspects, usually the one/ones these great minds considered central, but closer examination invariably showed had that there were other important aspects that these answers did not cover.

The problem starts with the very nature of language: is it an entity, a thing in and of itself, and if so, how abstract or how concrete a thing do we consider it to be. Is it a philosophical entity that somehow exists independent of its everyday use or is it something that is a basic human feature? Is it not perhaps a system rather than a thing? If so, this raises another set of questions, such as whether we are dealing with a fixed, a static system, or whether the system undergoes changes and, related to this, whether such changes are to be considered a part of language or not. Another way to see language is its use as a means of passing on information, which raises two questions: is language use always an exchange of information and is every exchange of information an instance of language use? Then there is the question as to where language is "situated", in a scholarly or didactic account that is largely scientific and objective, or in the minds and mouths of its speakers, which makes it rather an individualistic phenomenon and rather disorganised (as all the exceptions to rules we are confronted with when we learn of foreign language seem to suggest).

This list of questions is by no means exhaustive, but let us for a moment look at some further issues that asking them raises. To begin with, let us return briefly to the suggestion that language could be seen as a system. This system could be seen as a set of rules that can be defined and compiled in a book, a grammar book, which tells its users how to combine the words of that language, i.e. how they apply the rules to connect the items collected in a dictionary of that language. This seems neat and tidy, but such a rule book does not really explain that our choice of words say something about the views of the speaker, for instance whether he or she uses the word "terrorist" as opposed to "freedom fighter", to use an often quoted example. This element of content cannot be explained with a system of "grammatical" rules, at least not a relatively narrowly defined system of such rules. What about the very different messages we can convey with the same words, such as "well done", which can be either praise or criticism, depending on a number of factors that lie outside the rules that are used to combine the building blocks of vocabulary as suggested above. Similarly variations in tone when we say "yes" go beyond such rules and the accepted word meaning, because it is possible to signal disagreement or at least doubt when using this apparently affirmative word. If language is a system of sorts, it is considerably more complex than what we have learnt to see as "grammar and vocabulary" in more traditional settings dealing with the study of language, for instance in schools.

Some of the above considerations seem to suggest that language is a means of communication. Indeed, we often use language to pass on information, although this need not always be the case. When we say to someone we know and perhaps even love, "you are such an idiot", the words accompanied by a smile and perhaps a touch of the hand, this will most likely be interpreted as an endearment, not an insult; this content is communicated by gesture or facial expression not passed on by language. Conversely, there are instances of language use which do not result in information being conveyed, for instance when we talk to ourselves, often when stories or usually when jokes are being told, or during a rite e.g. a baptism, an inauguration, etc. By contrast, we can ask if the opposite applies: if information is passed on, does this necessarily constitute a form of language? When bees by their dance in the hive inform other bees about the direction and the distance of a source of nectar, do they use language? Do street signs and icons in everyday life (e.g. a crossed out cigarette), which all convey information too (i.e. "smoking is forbidden here"), use language, even though they are not even organic entities? And is it possible to let someone know that you disapprove of them without using a single word? This would suggest that language is related to communicating messages, but that this is hardly its only manifestation or its only purpose.

Furthermore, if the "locus" of language is in its speakers, in other words, if language is inextricably linked to those who (can) speak or at least understand it, which is a reasonable assumption, what exactly is the nature of this locus. Should we consider language how it

manifests itself in an individual, or is it a product of the collective consciousness of a group of humans. If the latter, is it in the consciousness of humans in general or only of those who in one manner or another "speak in the same way"? Are groups of such humans really ever so homogenous that they actually do speak "the same way"? Perhaps a bit more concretely, do all English speakers speak in the same way to the degree that we can say they all use the same language?

All in all, we can see that what looks like a simple question, i.e. "what is language", actually leads to a whole range of other questions, some of which we may be able to answer in this course, some of which other areas of language study can provide answers for, and then there are those questions to which answers will remain ever elusive.

1.1.2 The classic dichotomy

1.1.2.1 Two essential features

Any approach to a complex phenomenon in our world requires a metaphor or a simplified model, often one and the same thing, to help us conceptualise what we are observing. In order to find our way into the subject of what language is, we will therefore focus on certain of its elements to the exclusion of others and what characterises language in general.

To begin with, we may observe that what you have just read and what I have just written

a) is accessible to you as the readers (or, if I had said rather than written it, as the listeners), in other words, you can follow the ideas, and

b) it has never before been said in exactly that way.

This tells us two things: firstly, you have the means to follow the above, to decode what the words mean, to understand how the sentences are structured and, ideally, what I have attempted to convey with the text despite the fact that you have not encountered this kind of sequence of words and sentences, and perhaps even the ideas expressed here before. In other words, you have a *system or a set of systems* to understand the structure and the way it relates to your and my world, and you have the set of meanings that allow you to deduce what these lines are to inform you about. Secondly, as I have used words in a sequence and perhaps in a meaning that may be new or at least unusual to the degree that they have not been combined quite like this before, there is an element of *creativity* in the way I can formulate and you can understand. To put it more succinctly: Language is both *systematic* and *creative*.

1.1.2.2 One set of rules, endlessly varied manifestations

To return to the fact that complex phenomena can be made accessible with an image or a metaphor, we can see language as a game. Like a game it has a finite set of rules, which are binding and (usually) observed by the players, especially those who share the same cultural background: they therefore know what is an acceptable move in the game and what

is not. But even though the rules of the game are finite and clearly defined, i.e. they can be written down in a clearly delimited set of instructions, the number of actual instances where the game is played results in an infinite number of possible manifestations or outcomes, each one of which is different from the one(s) played before and the ones played afterwards.

If we consider poker as an example we have a relatively small set of rules concerning the values of the combinations of cards in a hand and a set of rules how players can bet on them. However, as we know from countless films, e.g. the scene between Chiffre and James Bond in *Casino Royale*, each actual game is different and varies in excitement and its manifestation.

Figure 1-1 An actual game of poker (www.pokerfanactics.net)

Figure 1-2 Rules of poker (www.fullhousepokersets.com/why-you-should-know-the-rules-of-poker)

The game metaphor can be translated to the classic dichotomy where in language, on the one hand, we have a set of rules and the elements that they apply to, and, on the other hand, we have all the instances, the manifestations, in which we see language being used in their infinite variety.

This dichotomy has been described in the following terms by two leading thinkers in the field of linguistics, by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and American thinker Noam Chomsky (*1928). They use different terms for what is, for our purposes, essentially the same two concepts:

	language as a system	language in its (creative) manifestation
De Saussure		
Chomsky		

For some linguists, especially those interested in how language works in itself, the focus is on the *systematicity of language*; for them the manifestations are mainly the (imperfect) realisation of the system of the language. For other linguists, who are primarily interested in the use of language, it is the manifestations of language and the impact this has on situations and interlocutors that they are concerned with. This second group extends the concept of systematicity to elements other than words and rules for their combination and would include, for instance, the rules that apply to make an utterance or sentence not just correct but also appropriate to a variety of parameters. Needless to say, neither of these two groups can be considered superior to the other and similarly, needless to say, both explore language and answer (different) questions, some of which were raised at the beginning of this chapter.

1.1.3 The status of the "Rules"

We typically associate the term "rules" with a set of binding instructions that must be obeyed. They *prescribe* what has to be done. If we consider language rules, which we may call a *grammar*, we often see them in the way we were exposed to them in formal schooling. Grammar rules, many assume, need to be followed carefully, and those who do not follow such language rules produce incorrect language, they make mistakes.

Let us consider a (very) small number of examples. An utterance like

(1a)   Did you eat yet?

contravenes the Standard English rule that *yet* triggers a Present Perfect; some language purists would therefore argue that anything other than

(1b)   Have you eaten yet?

is incorrect, is bad English. However, this utterance will not raise any eyebrows in an American conversation. Similarly, formal grammar rules state that if we ask after a person who is the subject of a sentence, we use *who* and if we ask after a person who is the object, we use *whom*. Thus in the sentence

(2a)   Mary met John this morning

if we want to find out who did the meeting we can ask

(2b)   Who met John this morning?

and, if we want to find out about which person Mary went to meet

    (2c)   Whom did Mary meet this morning?

However, in an everyday conversation, using the grammatically correct (2c) would be considered rather odd;

    (2d)   Who did Mary meet this morning?

would typically be preferred. In the same way, many language teachers will insist that ending a clause with a preposition is ungrammatical or at the very least bad language. According to this rule

    (3a)   This is the girl to whom I gave the keys.

is the correct way to say this. However, it is much more likely that a speaker in an everyday situation would say

    (3b)   This is the girl I gave the key to.

Lastly, utterances like

    (4)   John cookin now.

or

    (5)   John be cookin now.

would be condemned by many traditional grammarians as the speaker getting a continuous verb form wrong in two different ways, because either *to be* is missing altogether in (4) and not inflected in (5), quite apart from seemingly missing g at the end of the verb *cooking*. However, in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) utterances (4) and (5) are not only entirely in keeping with language rules (as is the pronunciation of *cookin* with an /n/ as the final sound), they do not represent two incorrectly formed continuous forms of the verb *cook*. In fact, they express two different concepts, in (4) that John is cooking at the time of speaking and in (5) that John is always in the middle of cooking around the time of speaking, a concept that cannot be expressed with verb inflection only in so-called grammatical English. This shows us that we need to be careful about the status of the rules in a grammar. "School" grammar is essentially based on a relatively conservative form of the standard language and demands that its rules be followed, otherwise the speaker uses bad or incorrect English; it is said to be **prescriptive.**

    By contrast, most linguists are interested in the rules that explain why we express certain things in certain ways. They see grammar as a set of rules that *describe* how language users form what they consider acceptable sentences. In this way they can provide an explanation for the examples of AAVE as being perfectly in keeping with what an AAVE speaker would accept as a well-formed utterance. In AAVE the rule is that *to be* is not inflected and will be left out as an auxiliary verb in the continuous (as well as, incidentally, a linking verb in "I not home tonight"). There is another rule that states that *be* + *verb*-ing expresses

a habitual action. All of these rules will be adhered to when well-formed utterances are produced in AAVE. So in contrast to the prescriptivist perspective, which is likely to condemn AAVE as ungrammatical (in terms of the standard norm), a ***descriptive*** grammarian will point out that AAVE is as much subject to rules and the rules are just as systematic as in any form of (standard) English.

This leaves us with one more issue, namely, that both the prescriptive and the descriptive approach to language are concerned with the rules of "grammatical" utterances or sentences, that these will or will not be considered acceptable to or ***well-formed*** in the perception of the majority of speakers. The prescriptive approach sees rules as the prerequisites that lead to correct language, the descriptivists see rules as the system that underlies the production of language that the speakers will consider well-formed and is in keeping with how their language is spoken.

1.1.4 Studying language

A question that we did not raise at the outset of this discussion is whether a language needs to be considered as a phenomenon at a given time, e.g. present day, 18th century, etc. or as an entity we examine from its beginnings (as far as they are known) to today and possibly beyond. To put it differently: is it related to one particular moment in time or does it include older and oldest forms (as well as speculations as to what it might look like in the future).

As, for instance, the various meanings of the word *nice* over time indicate (from *nescius*, i.e. *ignorant*, via *shy*, *delicate* and *fine* to present day *pleasant*), language changes all the time. The use of periphrastic *do* for questions and negation is a relatively novel development as a reading of any Shakespeare play will indicate. *Heavy* enjoyed a brief spell in the Sixties and Seventies meaning *difficult* and *unpleasant* etc. whereas nowadays in this meaning it is as dated as the term *groovy* from the same period. However, another word from youth language of that time, *cool*, is still happily in use. It may have even undergone a change in (British English) pronunciation which allows some speakers to distinguish between the meaning "not warm, not very cold" [kuːl] and the meaning of "impressive, desirable, socially adept", for which a different /u/ is often used, one that doesn not have rounded lips [kɯːl]. What these examples show is that language is subject to change, some changes result in an older form disappearing, some lead to further changes, some changes are merely temporary. How a change will affect the language in the future, is often difficult or impossible to tell, although there are certain changes that are relatively predictable, for example, some consonant changes described in the "law" that bears the name of those early exponents of linguistics, the Brothers Grimm. What these thoughts demonstrate is that we can consider language in a historical perspective in its development over time, but also that we can explore it at particular points in time, for instance, in the Middle Ages, in the 19th century, at present, etc.

This means that there are two perspectives on language, one longitudinal, the other focused on a specific period in time. Again, a metaphor might be useful. If we study a tree starting from the root and growing more and more branches we can get an overview from the point which started with the seed in the soil to the solid entity that stands in an field now. The way the tree has grown gives us an insight into the conditions it has lived through, into its history. By contrast, we can take a cross-section of the trunk or a branch and look at the grain and what the grain tells us, e.g. how the lines are spaced, etc., in other words what the tree structure was like at a given point in the growth.

Figure 1-4 Language in its entire development over time from root to leaf

Figure 1-3 Language at a specific period in time (where the saw cuts...)

When we are concerned with the development of language over an extended duration, using the tree metaphor, from root to leaf or with a longitudinal section of trunk (or the branches), we talk about a _____ approach. In focusing on a specific moment in language development, at the point we would metaphorically cut the tree, we are choosing a _____ approach. Again, neither approach is superior to the other, they merely look at language from a different perspective, as the development of a phenomenon or as the state it is in at a given moment.

1.1.5 So what *is* language?

Now let us return to some of the questions raised in 1.1 and examine how they manifest themselves in instances of language and language use. This will illustrate to some degree what language and its function is for human beings. Needless to say, the list is far from exhaustive, but will also illustrate to a point what we as linguists are dealing with.

To begin with, we have an instance of a speaker who refers to a situation and to some elements in the situation that seem to warrant mentioning:

(6)   I never realized that you were in pain. I want to help you honey, let me see you again.

After the speaker has made this statement, a listener will be better informed about a number of issues, for instance that the speaker was unaware of the listener's discomfort, that he or she is prepared to help, but also possibly interested in a deeper relationship. All or some of these elements may have been unknown to the listener before the utterance was made. In other words, (6) illustrates one of the prime functions of language, language as a [   ] [   ].

Another aspect of language is important in the following example:

(7) Foreman to new worker: "I don't waste words. When I wave at you like this, it means I want you to come over."
New worker: "I don't waste words either. If I shake my head like this, it means I won't."

Here too information is passed on, from the foreman to the new worker. However, what is important here is that they both indicate that they will use specific signs, a wave of the hand or a shake of the head, and that these signs have a clearly assigned meaning. This illustrates that there is an instance of agreement between the two, the signs have to mean the same thing to both participants in the exchange, in other words this is an instance of language (and gestures) as a [   ] [   ].

The excerpt from a linguistic paper illustrates another important aspect of language, one that we have already briefly discussed above.

(8) Observations of speakers' use and tests of preferences for sentences with *be* indicate that speakers of African-American Vernacular English will systematically select *be* for habitual contexts such as *Sometimes they be doing it* but not for single-time contexts such as *They be doing it right now*. (Wolfram 1998: 109)

What Wolfram expresses here is that AAVE, far from being ungrammatical as some uninformed believers in the Standard as the only acceptable form of English would have it, is in fact very clearly [   ] and that such seeming "breakdowns" of conventional rules are in fact [   ].

With our next example we can illustrate two things:

(9) First I will consider whether verbs when combined with each other do so in the base form with or without to in contrast to taking an –ing suffix. Then I will try to formulate rules for this, what I would call 'the verbal daisy chain'.

Firstly, (9) expresses what the speaker has thought about and how he or she will go about presenting the findings of this thought process. Secondly, and this is a point we will return to below, the phenomenon described, a sequence of verbs in a sentence, is presented in a rather imaginative way, probably in a way that very few listeners – if any – will ever have come across before. In other words, (9) illustrates that language can express [   ] [   ] that it is in fact a means for [   ], that it can express the result in a highly unconventional, [   ] fashion.

A similar phenomenon is at work in our next example, a speech from Macbeth (V.5. 19-28) in which he expresses his nihilism in the face of recent developments, in particular the death of his wife.

> (10) To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

Whereas (9) demonstrated how a speaker can organise ideas through language, here the speaker uses language to organise what has happened and to come to terms with the fact that he has achieved what was prophesised but at considerable cost. He thus uses language to structure his ⬚, and once again, he does so very ⬚ , using vivid images, which in this form an audience is probably confronted with for the first time, a typical characteristic of literary and poetic language.

Using language for structuring goes further than this:

> (11) Policeman: "What's your name, boy?"
> Black Doctor: "Dr. Poussaint. I'm a physician."
> Policeman: "What's your first name, boy!"
> Black Doctor: "Alvin." (Wardhaugh 2010: 283)

What we are confronted with here is the situation with different power differentials. On the surface, Dr Poussaint would appear to be in a socially stronger position due to his education and his profession. However, the policeman is endowed with certain powers, and this policeman reinforces them by using an interaction scheme which is based on white supremacy and a history of oppression of African-Americans, who are routinely referred to as "boy". By ignoring Poussaint's attempt to establish at least an equilibrium or possibly a social superiority and insisting on being told his interlocutor's first name, another instance of establishing superior social power, the policeman clearly puts the African-American physician in "his place". This exchange then illustrates language is a powerful tool to structure ⬚ and impose ⬚ in an interaction.

This is also possible because of another function of language which can be illustrated with the excerpt from the Book of Judges.

> (12) 4. Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim:
> and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, "Ye Gileadites are
> fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites."
> 5. And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was
> so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, "Let me go over"; that the
> men of Gilead said unto him, "Art thou an Ephraimite?" If he said, "Nay";

6. Then said they unto him, "Say now Shibboleth"; and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand. (*King James Bible*, Judges 12.4-6; event of 1125 BC)

Saying the word "shibboleth" incorrectly marks the Ephraimites as the enemy, as a member of what is sometimes called the out-group in comparison to the in-group, the Gileadites. How someone speaks is an indication to their identity, be it regionally with a dialect or in terms of class in a sociolect. That shibboleth to this day is a term for a distinguishing feature in someone's speech is a strong indication of how far back such distinctions go and that the way we use language constitutes a ☐ as well as a potential means of discrimination.

We have seen above (1.1.1) that language can also be used in certain rites and that the related utterances do not really convey information has such. Consider

(13) By the power vested in me and in the name of the State of New York, I hereby pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride.

The operative elements in (13) are the words "I hereby pronounce you…". They indicate, firstly that something is achieved by the use of the verb *pronounce*; that, secondly, the speaker has a specific power, i.e. to make that pronouncement; that thirdly the place where and the manner in which the pronouncement was made is significant; and, finally, that somebody's status will have changed as a result of this pronouncement. We shall return to this function of language, i.e. that it can be used to ☐ , sometimes ritualised ☐ in chapter 7.

The next example illustrates the same phenomenon in two ways:

(14a) I really don't appreciate this kind of language around here!

(14b) 1 a: the words, their pronunciation, and the methods of combining them used and understood by a community
b: audible, articulate, meaningful sound as produced by the action of the vocal organs
2: a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings
3: the suggestion by objects, actions, or conditions of associated ideas or feelings <language in their very gesture – Shakespeare> …

In order to talk about language we need to use language. In (14a) the speaker uses it to object against the way somebody uses language, perhaps being crude, using swearwords or touching on taboo topics (sexist, racist, etc. language). (14b) lists the Merriam-Webster dictionary definitions of *language*. This shows that we use language to describe language, i.e. that language is also self-referential.

In (12) we have seen a close connection between a group and the language that is typically used in this group. Samuel Johnson's statement about the disappearance of a language and why this is to be deplored takes this notion one step further:

(15) "There is no tracing the connection of ancient nations, but by language; and therefore I am always sorry when any language is lost, because languages are the pedigree of nations." Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) in Boswell: Tour of the Hebrides

The idea that language is more than just something spoken by a group of people (Johnson equates group with nation, which is a problematic connection to make as we will see below, but also in the context of language and society later on in sociolinguistics). Language is also understood to be linked to the very nature of the group, it is part of its DNA, its "pedigree". According to this approach languages are not just relatively abstract entities but that they represent a vehicle for or are intricately linked with the culture of a group, a society, or with a "nation", to use Johnson's view. Language, in other words, is a ☐ ☐ and of " ☐ ".

The term "nation" is somewhat problematic as it suggests a uniformity and homogeneity that does not actually exist. That English as a language is no exception to this heterogeneity can be seen in the various forms of the Lord's Prayer:

(16a) Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum; Si þin nama gehalgod
to becume þin rice, gewurþe ðin willa on eorðan swa swa on heofonum.
urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us todæg…

(16b) Oure fadir that art in heuenes, halewid be thi name;
thi kyndoom come to; be thi wille don in erthe as in heuene:
gyue to us this dai oure breed ouer othir substaunce…

(16c) Our father which art in heauen, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdome come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heauen
Giue vs this day our daily bread…

(16d) Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread…

(16e) Our Father in Heaven, let your holy name be known,
let your kingdom come, and your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today the bread that we need…

(16a) represents the most archaic form of what we consider (Old) English, Anglo-Saxon, spoken between 450 and 1150, (16b) the form it developed into, Middle English, with this example being taken from the 1380 Wycliff Bible. (16c) represents what is known as Early Modern English, the English spoken in Shakespeare's days; the version is the one in the King James Bible of 1611. (16d) and (16e) are examples of Modern English, albeit from different periods, from the Book of Common Prayer of 1928 and from the Alba New Testament of the 1970s respectively; the two differ in terms of how they have or have not retained the traditional formulaic or liturgical language with the new version completely doing away with any of it and adopting a much more conversational tone. All of these are "English" but clearly these forms of English differ from each other as they represent how the language ☐ .

The following versions of the Lord's Prayer are all contemporary and are all at least linked to English if they are not actually what we call "variants" of English.

(17a) Yo, Big Daddy upstairs, you be chillin.
So be yo hood. You be sayin' it, I be doin' it in dis here hood and yos.
Gimme some eats…

(17b) Hello, Dad, up there in good ol' 'eaven, your name is well great and 'oly, and we respect you, Guv.
We hope we can all 'ave a butcher's at 'eaven and be there as soon as possible: and we want to and do what you want, Guv, 'ere on earth, same as in 'eaven.
Please give us our Uncle Fred to keep the ribs apart today…

(17c) Oor Faither wha bides in heiven, hallowt be thy name;
Thy Kinrick come; thy will be dune, in the yird, as in the lan o' the leal.
Gie us wir breid ilk day…

(17d) Papa bilong mipela, yu stap long heven. Nem bilong yu i mas i stap holi. Kingdom bilong yu i mas i kam. Strongim mipela long bihainim laik bilong yu long graun, olsem ol i bihainim long heven.
Givim mipela kaikai inap long tude…

(17e) We Papa een heaben, leh ebrybody hona you nyame cause you da holy.
We pray dat soon you gwine rule oba all ob we. Wasoneba ting you da want, leh um be een dis wol, same like e be dey een heaben.
Gee we de food wa we need dis day yah an ebry day…

(17a) and (17b), African-American Vernacular English and British Cockney, are considered "variants" or dialects of English. They are part of this conglomerate of variant forms called English to which the standard forms Received Pronunciation or Standard British English and General American English also belong, although both are often understood to be (proper) "English" as such; for linguists, however, they are variants or dialects like Cockney or AAVE, although they have considerably more social prestige. Variants may differ from each other in terms of vocabulary, even with slang expression meant to confuse outsiders – similar to (12) – such as the Cockney Rhyming Slang expression *Uncle Fred* which means *bread*. (17c), Scots, Doric or Lallans poses a bit of a problem, because it is sometimes considered a variant and sometimes a separate language, just like Swiss German and Standard German. There may well be a more marked difference between variants of English on the one hand and English and Lallans on the other. The German sociolinguist therefore created terms that reflect this state between variant and separate language, i.e. "semi-language" (*Halbsprache*) or "language with a distance" (*Abstandssprache*) (cf. Kloss 1967). Needless to say that such distinctions are rather problematic and views differ between linguists, who tend to use scientific criteria and speakers of such codes, who for ideological reasons may emphasise differences or deny them for "national(istic)" divergence or cohesion.[1] (17d) and (17e) are not normally considered forms of English, but they are so-called English-based creoles, the first being Tok Pisin, spoken in Papua New Guinea, the second is called Gullah and is spoken by African Americans, former slaves, in the low-lying areas between Charleston, South

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[1] An example for the former is the separation into Serb and Croat of what was Serbo-Croatian until the 1990s. An example for the latter was the claim of the Italian *Irredenta* under Mussolini that Raetoromansh was an Italian dialect and the Rumantschia therefore belonged to Italy.

Carolina, and Jacksonville, Florida, and the islands off that sea coast (South Eastern US). Creoles arise from so-called pidgins, which are highly simplified forms of language that allow speakers from two different languages, usually one of them culturally or economically dominant and thus used more widely (e.g. English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, etc.), the other spoken locally, to communicate with each other. They use a small stock of vocabulary, usually from the dominant language, with the meanings extended to cover a wide variety of related meanings[2] and their sentence structure tends to be very simple and based on what the speakers' sentence structure would be like. Once these simplified languages, often used for trade or limited communication, are learned by a new generation as a first language, they become more complex in terms of vocabulary and they become more fixed in their sentence structures. In summary, whereas (16) demonstrate how English differs over time, (17) shows differences in terms of   and also, often implicitly, in terms of social stratification.

A final feature of language, and one that as students of language and literature we are clearly familiar with is its use for (cultural) enjoyment.

(18) missed

    out of work
    divorced
    usually pissed

    he aimed
    low in life
    and
            missed

        Roger McGough

The poem by Roger McGough plays with meanings and concepts like aims we may have in life, that we may miss a target we aim for and the fact that we usually describe worthwhile things in terms of height and failure with in adjectives like low; but it clearly also uses sounds such as alliteration in "low in life" as well as rhyme "pissed" and "missed" with a degree of playfulness not associated with a simple transmission of information. An important feature of language, especially for those who enjoy literature, is that it represents a source of enjoyment and even fun.

1.1.6 Types of language

In linguistics we can look at different types of language. The following list is by no means exhaustive, it is simply intended to give a general idea of what kind of language a linguist

---

[2] *bilong* thus means, *belong*, *of*, *along*; *pela* – from *fellow* – is *person* in the widest sense: *tripela* would mean *three*. "Papa bilong mipela" therefore means "my/our father" "kingdom bilong yu" means "your kingdom".

may explore. The most obvious forms of language that would come under consideration, especially for developing a grammar for use in education is represented in (19).

> (19a) Our centre has made every endeavour not to marginalise any members of this neighbourhood.
>
> (19b) Our center made every endeavor not to marginalize any members of this neighborhood.

Although (19a) and (19b) look identical at first glance there are noticeable differences. (19a) represents [   ] whereas (19b) is an example of [   ]. The difference lies mainly in orthography, but also in the more widespread use of the present perfect represented in (19a).

Another type of language of interest in linguistics is exemplified here:

> (20a) Y'all get yo sorry asses ouda this here car.
>
> (20b) Youse be'er bugger of oot av this coach.

The meaning is the same in both, a speaker is telling a group of people to leave a section of a train. (20a) has typical features of Southern American [   ] with a *y'all* as a *you* plural, which is unavailable in the standard, whereas (20b) with *youse* as the same pronominal reference is typical a Scottish or an English [   ] from the Border area. Other features seem to indicate the same region but as this is not given phonetically such an assumption must remain speculative. Other difference are the reference to the section of the train *car* vs. *coach* and the expression of impatience with the addressees.

A similarly different use of items of vocabulary and grammatical features is in evidence in (21):

> (21a) Would you be so kind as to vacate this carriage.
>
> (21b) Youse be'er bugger of oot av this coach.

Here the difference between the two ways of expressing the same concept is one of [   ]. (21a) represents an elevated and somewhat formal mode of expression, (21b) can be seen as rather informal. What is perhaps more important here, rather than the difference in style may also be that the two versions represent a difference in social markers. In this case we talk about a [   ].

Various forms of expressing oneself which owe nothing to either region or social class can also be observed in the way individual people express themselves.

> (22) My sufficiency has been elegantly suffonsified.

represents such a highly individualistic way of expressing oneself. Anecdotally this example was used by a grandparent of an acquaintance to say "I'm full-up", which is sometimes expressed by the rather overly formal "I have had an elegant sufficiency". The technical term for such an individualistic way of speaking, including with the creation of the word *suffonsified*, a so-called neologism, is [   ].

So far we have considered forms of English. Other kinds of language that we may study are

(23a) Ayr ain t'ayns niau, casherick dy row dt'ennym.

(23b) Ár n-Athair, atá ar neamh, go naofar d'ainm

(23c) Ar n-Athair a tha air nèamh, gu naomhaichear d' ainm.

All three examples belong to a group of Celtic languages known as the Goidelic group. (23a) is Manx, the language of the Isle of Man, (23b) represents Modern Irish and (23c) expresses the same meaning Scots Gaelic. Whereas Modern Irish and Scots Gaelic still have first language speakers, although in ever shrinking numbers, Ned Mandrell, the last known speaker of Manx died in 1974. In other words, Irish and Gaelic are ☐ languages, Manx with no first-language speakers has to be considered a ☐ language, like Latin or Ancient Greek.

What also commands considerable interest among language lovers are languages like (24) and (25) but for different reasons.

(24) Ash nazg durbatulûk, ash nazg gimbatul,
ash nazg thrakatulûk agh burzum-ishi krimpatul.
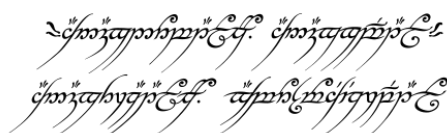
J.R.R.Tolkien, a medievalist created a whole range of languages for his Middle Earth, for which he used his expertise in Nordic and Celtic languages, "Black Speech" being one of them. Other examples of languages created like this are Na'vi for the film *Avatar*, Klingon in the *Star Trek* series and Dothraki in the HBO series *Game of Thrones*. This is different, however, for

(25) La knabo vidis la nigra hundo.

which is one of several language created with the purpose to make communication between speakers of different mother tongue easier. *Esperanto* mixes various European languages and has a very simple inflection system free of any "exceptions" that make life difficult for learners of natural language. Black Speech, Na'vi, Klingon, Dothraki, etc., are often also constructed by or with the help of linguists, but for "cultural" reasons. What they all have in common is that they are all ☐ languages.

Each surah in the Koran except for the 9th begins

(26) Bismi Allahi arrahmani arraheem

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾
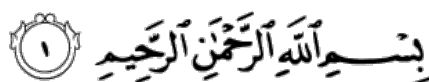
The Koran is clearly a religious text but it is also held in high regard by more secular thinkers for its fine writing. In other words, it represents not just a holy scripture but it also is seen as an instance of ☐ .

Although the same to a degree applies to

    (27)   Glory be to God on high
             And in earth peace, goodwill towards men,

             We praise thee, we bless thee,
             we worship thee, we glorify thee,
             we give thanks to thee, for thy great glory
             O Lord God, heavenly King,
             God the Father Almighty.

there is something that is a level of archaic usage alongside its specific place in the religious ceremony – it is a hymn – that is its distinguishing feature. Because of this, (27) represents an instance of ⬚ language.

The following example is interesting to a student of language for a different reason:

    (28a)   Patrons are kindly requested to refrain from smoking.

    (28b)   No smoking

Both (28a) and (28b) have the same meaning but they express it differently. To be more precise there is a difference in terms of ⬚ or ⬚ with the language in (28a) being more ⬚ whereas in (28b) it is rather more ⬚ .

Although the following are also two ways to express the same concepts in English there is a sizeable difference between them.

    (29a)   a bilabial velaric click / a voiced glottal fricative

    (29b)   smacking your lips / moan or sigh

(29a) would mean nothing to a non-linguist or to someone without any knowledge of vocal technique or anatomy. (29b) is much more accessible to language users in general, but the terms also present less detailed information. Whereas (29b) expresses the concept in laypersons' terms, (29a) requires the knowledge of specialised, subject-related vocabulary. It is an instance of ⬚ or ⬚ language/terminology.

The following examples also express the same concept in different ways.

    (30a)   In the course of the relentless bombing huge numbers of defenceless women and children were blown to bits.

    (30b)   In the bombardment there were heavy civilian casualties.

    (30c)   In the servicing of soft targets there was collateral damage.

(30b) presents the information in the least "engaged" terms, doing so relatively unemotionally. (30a), by contrast, quite obviously shows the considerable involvement of the passionately indignant speaker whereas the speaker in (30c), by avoiding words like "bombardment" and by not referring to people or to the loss of life, can refer to the traumatic events avoiding or at least downplaying what might arouse a reaction of disgust or anger in the listener. What we are confronted here is ⬚ language vs. a ⬚ and/or ⬚ or distanced use of language.

Another area of language study is to consider what the typical elements are in the language used in specific contexts or fields

(31)   In the next game, from 30-30, he put a forehand wide and then another half way up the net. It was the first of seven breaks of the Federer serve as he squandered that break in the first set and then a double break in the second.

Several items of vocabulary, but also *collocations* like "put a forehand wide" or "squander a break" that clearly identify this excerpt from the bbc.co.uk website as a text about ____ .

Even if we do not recognise

(32)   I wandered lonely as a cloud
       That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
       When all at once I saw a crowd,
       A host, of golden daffodils;
       Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
       Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

as Wordsworth's probably most famous piece of writing "The Daffodils", the rhymes, the regular rhythm but also imagery like the "crowd" or "host" of flowers "dancing" in the wind as well as the line breaks characterise this instance of language use as the language of [   ] .

The next example,

(33)   Removing the apical buds removes the source of growth-inhibiting chemicals, so the buds behind it are able to grow into shoots.

may sound rather confusing to anyone who does not know anything about pruning fruit trees. The reference to "buds", "growth" and "shoot" however are an indication that this text is about [   ] .

There are also pointers in (34) that make it clear what kind of a text type this is:

(34)   so if your message ain't shit, fuck the records you sold
       cuz if you go platinum, it's got nothing to do with luck
       it just means that a million people are stupid as fuck

The orthography ("cuz"), the grammar and vocab ("your message ain't shit"), the choice of words in general, but also the rhythm and rhyme, make it clear that this excerpt must be a [   ] .[3]

There are also "pointers" as to what kind of language we are concerned with in

(35)   Printers that don't use proprietary vendor codes communicate with computers using one or more of three major printing protocols. The communication is done over a hardware cable that can be a parallel connection (printer port) or a serial connection (COM port).[4]

Such pointers are words like "codes", "protocols", "hardware", "serial connection", etc. They clearly place this instance of language use in the [   ] domain.

Pointers or a different kind help us identify the type of language we encounter in

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[3] http://rapgenius.com/Immortal-technique-industrial-revolution-lyrics#note-54214
[4] http://docs.freebsd.org/doc/4.3-RELEASE/usr/share/doc/en/books/corp-net-guide/x28.html

(36)   Man, you're like a total breadhead, that's such a bummer.

Here it is expressions like "breadhead" to refer to someone who is concerned with (earning) money and "bummer", a turn-off, that are reminiscent of the way young people spoke in the second half of Sixties and the first half of the Seventies. Either of these expressions are no severely dated and used mainly for comical impact. Interestingly enough, "total" is still used as an intensifier and so is the marker "like". The selective datedness of some elements and the continued vigour of others are typical for this kind of language use, of what is often referred to as [   ], in particular [   ], which sounds really odd ("like totally weird") when used by the wrong people at the wrong age.

The pointers in

(37)   r u smart bcoz i need some1 smart :)

are of a very different nature. First of all, unlike the other instances of language use, this clearly relies on being a written medium as "r", "bcoz" and "some1" cannot be readily pronounced. The smiley emoticon also is only possible in a written medium. Furthermore, this instance of language use relies on brevity as a necessary feature, something that is fairly unique to texting with its constraints in terms of characters and the traditional awkwardness of composing text messages with a number pad. But like texting also emails between friends or contributions to chats and instant messaging rely on speed and thus brevity, for which a certain amount of orthography and punctuation is sacrificed, but compensated for with the codified use of symbols to express how the message is to be taken, similar to a facial expression in oral face-to-face communication. This text type therefore shares features of informal oral interaction and written language, which is typical for [   ].

Other types of language we might want to study are directly linked to specific speakers and the abilities or limitations they typically show. Here two examples will have to suffice. The first is an interesting instance because without further information it is not clear if it is an infant or her/his carer that would say

(38)   Milk allgone?

to express that there may be no more milk. Small children's way of speaking is quite unique and it usually goes through a number of stages that can be predicted quite accurately. (38) is relatively typical of a first attempt by infants to combine what they consider units of meaning, thus laying the groundwork for sentence building to follow later on. Very often carers will imitate such combinations as in (38), leading to the possible question whether it is the carers that are responsible for some typical combinations as we have it in the example. We characterise such instances of early language use as [   ] and the way in which carers may speak to children as [   ].

Another instance of language use specific to certain speakers manifests itself in

(39) Well this is … mother is away here working her work o'here to get her better, but when she's looking, the two boys looking in the other part. One their small tile into her time here. She's working another time because she's getting, too.

Here a patient with a brain lesion is attempting to describe a picture in which a mother in the kitchen[5] is drying the dishes while two children are stealing some cookies behind her back. Without this information, utterance (39) is virtually incomprehensible, this instance of language use being an example for [   ], in this case [   ] language.

To conclude this rather sketchy tour of the kinds of language or types of language use we can research as students of language we also need to take into consideration the various examples of (16) and (17) as representative for the use of language over time and in very different regions of the Earth.

1.1.7 What does language consist of?

In order to be able to develop an understanding of how language works, in other words, to study the linguistics of a given language (English in our case) we need to break the phenomenon down into manageable elements. Each of these elements might represent a field of linguistic study. The table below (once again, not exhaustive for reasons that will become clear in 2.1) represents a possible way in which we can break an individual language down into such elements.

1.
[p] [b] [t] [d]   ȹ ƀ t ȸ   *p b t d*   **p**en / **b**en / **t**en / **d**en
2.
pen / pens / penned / penlike / pen-friend / penman / penmanship
3.
- the pen   - the mighty pen   - the pen is mightier than the sword   - she penned a first novel, which was about her family, when she was in her early twenties.
4.
pen: 1 (noun): a) a writing implement, b) an enclosure for animals, c) an enclosed play area for toddlers, d) a prison, e) a female swan 2 (verb): a) write a literary text, b) enclose or keep in a pen
5.
That the pen be mightier than the sword may be counter-intuitive. There are several instances in history, however, where a tract or a treatise has at least contributed to unleashing momentous events, for instance Abbé Sieyès pamphlet "Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?" (What is the Third Estate?) and the beginning of the French Revolution …

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[5] The picture can be seen at http://www.rachaelanne.net/teaching/psych/aphasia_HO.doc

6.
• "Yo ol' man, he been in de pen too long."   • Your progenitor's confinement to a correctional facility has been of a considerable duration.

A slightly different approach would be to look at the elements which a language consist of in somewhat less lay-person's terms. This will be done in the following subsection 1.2.

1.2 Linguistics as the Study of Language

1.2.1 A basic division: theoretical study and applied exploration

So far we have encountered a difference in the way in which linguists might approach their subject, i.e. in terms of whether they look at a longitudinal development of a given language or whether they explore the state of a language at a specific point in time, in other words, whether they choose to look at language diachronically or synchronically. However, there is also another division: Do we look at language as an entity, what this entity consists of and how its component parts work, or do we look at language or languages as a phenomenon in use and therefore linked to its/their users.

The former approach assumes an idealisation of the language as a system, as well as an artificial, idealised language user (Chomsky in fact talks of the "idealised speaker listener"), who has perfect mastery of the language and does not make mistakes; furthermore, this speaker is monolingual. The focus is on explaining how the language and its component parts work, the sound system, the way in which the language is written, the way its words are constructed, how words are combined into meaningful and well-formed utterances, what its words mean and how the language logically has meaning. What all this suggests is that this approach is rather theoretical.

If this first approach could be compared to pure or theoretical maths, by contrast, the second approach is more like practical physics in the sense that it uses the theoretical tools of pure maths, but applies them to real life phenomena that do not always comply with the theory but whose methodology and the findings are often close enough to it to allow sensible conclusions. Thus the second approach looks at a variety of issues, listed here a little unsystematically: how speakers acquire a language, how they may lose it, how speakers can be taught other languages, how they use language to structure relationships, what we can gather from the way people speak about their origins, their background, their aspirations, how language is stratified and how it changes through negotiation, how speakers of different variants of a language or of different languages interact with each other, etc.

Whereas the first approach looks at language in its micro-elements, the second approach looks at language in more comprehensive, and by definition more interdisciplinary terms.

1.2.2 From language to linguistics

If we consider what we have discussed so far, we can broadly list the elements that make up a language into two categories, which largely correspond with the notion of the basic division mentioned above. We can see language as an entity in itself with an underlying system that works on a number of levels, from the basic building blocks of sounds and letters to the way in which we form texts. On the other hand, we can analyse language in terms of how it is manifests itself in practice, when we will see it as a fluctuating, self-defining system that is constantly negotiated in its use and that is inevitably subject to variation and change, which comes into existence because of the way the individual speakers use it.

A way to illustrate this and then to apply it to the fields of study in linguistics is the following table. We begin by listing the various elements in the two main categories of language (Table 2-1); this approach is loosely based on Crystal (2009: 2-3), which is a very useful starting point.

Elements of language				Use/Variations of Language	
	graphic elements	speech sounds		variation	
	writing system	sound system			
	building blocks for words			/ variation	
	meaning of words			variation	
	combination rules for phrases and sentences				
				variation	
	combination of sentences	"turns" in a conversation		duration	change

Table 1-1 Language in terms of elements and use/variation (based on Crystal 2009)

If we take the above, on the one hand, as representing the elements that make up language as an entity, and, on the other hand, the ways in which language is used, which inevitably leads to practical deviations from the theoretical "idealisations", and deduce from this model of language elements and language use the various areas of linguistics (table 2-2).

"Linguistics"					
Elements of language				Use/Variations of Language	
Graphology	Phonetics			variation	Psycholinguistics Neurolinguistics
	Phonology			/ variation	Dialectology Sociolinguistics
Morphology				variation	Sociolinguistics Sociology of Language
Semantics					
Syntax				variation	Historical Linguistics
Text Linguistics	Pragmatics Discourse / Conversation Analysis			duration: approach	change: approach

Table 1-2 Fields of linguistics

However, as with all neat subdivisions, of course, the reality is somewhat more complex and there are areas of language analysis that fall into either or both categories. Consider, for instance, language philosophy, which explores areas that can belong to either of the categories, depending on the focus of the language philosopher in question. The same applies, perhaps even more so, to pragmatics and text linguistics as they may well focus on language in a relatively abstract manner and use a methodology that relies to a considerable degree on language theory, but clearly focus on language in use. However, apart from methodological considerations, in the disciplines of the left-hand column there is often strong tendency towards formulating findings in terms predictability. To put it more simply, in theoretical linguistics we often look for models that can explain certain language phenomena, also in terms of language manifestations that have not taken place yet. Theoretical linguistic analysis tends to work with idealised forms of language (consider Chomsky's idealised speaker listener) and often with relatively limited data, which need not be linked to a specific instance of language use. It has been said, for instance, that Chomsky analysed language with an amount of data which could be fitted on a blackboard.

The disciplines in the right-hand column, by contrast, clearly often also aim for predictability, but, as it can be quite elusive at times, it need not be the final objective in research; predictability is often limited to tendencies because of the complexity and diversity of language in use and the situations in which this occurs, which often is so individual and so specific that a generalisation, which is the aim of theoretical methods, is simply not possible. For this reason, one could argue that these two areas referred to above, pragmatics and text linguistics could be represented also in the right-hand column.

Considering the interdisciplinary nature of the study of language, the fact that we use language in so many fields that go beyond the outline presented in tab. 2-2, it comes as no

surprise that what can be covered in linguistics is very varied indeed. The illustration below (fig. 2-1) represents the dual approach of section 2.1: the study of language theory as the central element of the circle, the exploration of how we can apply linguistic findings in practice shown in the outer circle as further fields of linguistics. It does so in considerably more detail than the model presented above, but as many, indeed, most of these areas of application of linguistics are highly specialised, we can simply acknowledge for the moment that they exist but their discussion in an introduction of this kind would lead too far.
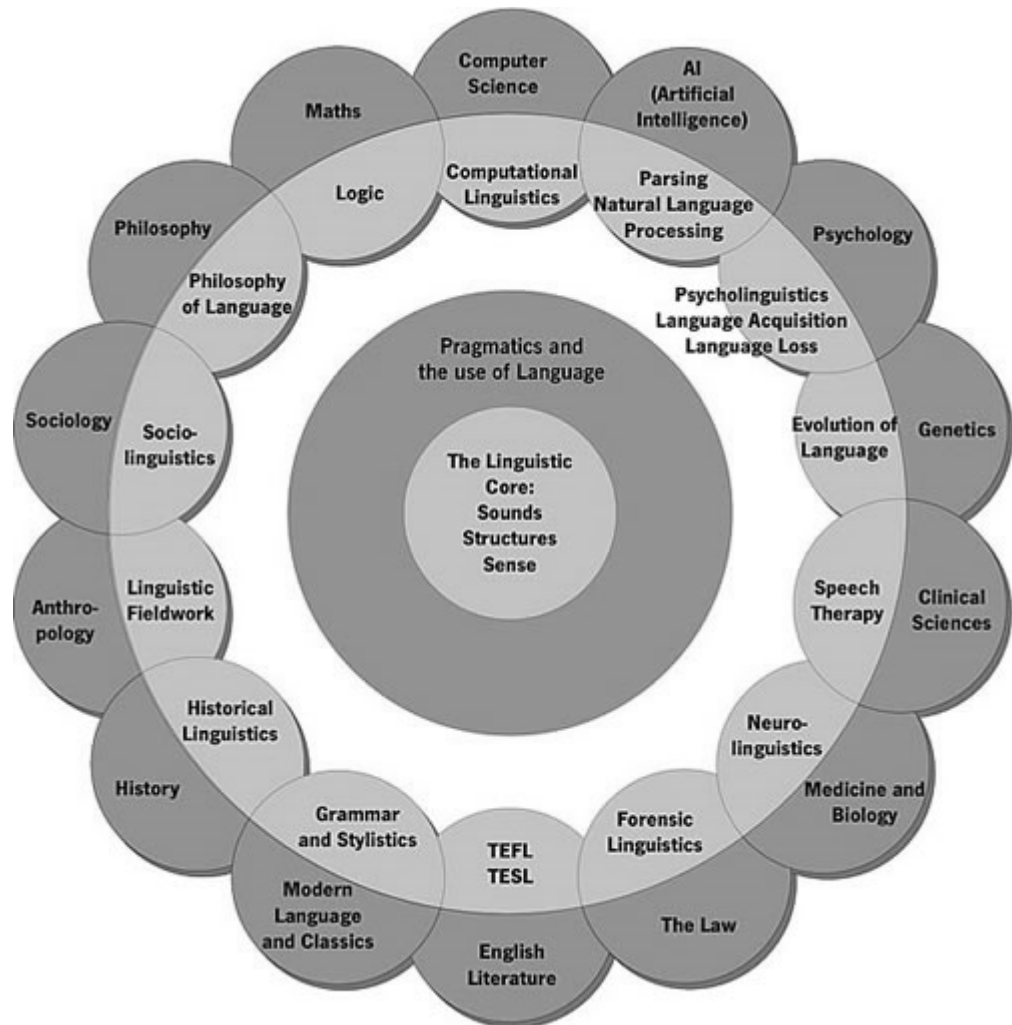
Figure 1-5 The Interdisciplinary nature of Linguistics (www.philology-upatras.gr/en/department/glossology)

1.2.3 Focus of the next chapters

In this Introduction to Linguistics, we will focus largely on the theoretical approach to the study of language. We will follow the system presented earlier (in 1.1.7). However, we will (at least in the parts where there is a choice between spoken and written manifestations of language) concentrate on the spoken variety. This means that graphology and the study of writing systems, fascinating as it is, will be left to other study courses and/or to the

individual student. An interesting and entertaining overview is presented in *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language* by David Crystal (2005).

The sequence of topics of this introduction will look like this:

1.2.3.1 Sounds of language I: Phonetics

We will firstly study how speech sounds are produced, look at how we can describe them and then develop the system for representing speech sounds in writing.

1.2.3.2 Sounds of language II: Phonology

In a second step we will look at how speech sounds are part of a specific system, that of the English language: how do they relate to each other, what are the ways in which they can/cannot be combined. Here we will also look at how speech sounds combine into larger units and explore patterns of which elements will be particularly noticeable.

1.2.3.3 Building blocks of words: Morphology

In Morphology we will examine the way in which words in English are composed. We will also find about the various categories which words can belong to and how they can change from one such category to another. Lastly we will consider the strategies English uses to create (new) words.

1.2.3.4 Word meaning: Semantics

Although meaning clearly goes beyond the word level, for the time being we will start by looking at what words express and how they do this. In this consideration we also are concerned with the various layers of meaning, such as the objective vs. the emotive meaning of words, but we will also consider variation, sameness and overlap of meaning as well as opposite meanings of certain words.

1.2.3.5 Combination rules for phrases and sentences: Syntax

In this part of the introduction we will look at the way words are combined into phrases and what the constituents of sentences are; this is the structure of sentences. This will be tied in with the way in which we can assign functions in the sentence to these structural elements. Clearly there is a fair amount of overlap with the Modern English Grammar course and cross-references will be made.

1.2.3.6 Beyond the sentence/ turns in conversation: Pragmatics

This part deals with the way in which sentences are combined into discourse or into a conversation (although, of course, sentences in writing tend to be overtly closer to the laws

of syntax than utterances in conversation, which are often characterised by false starts or elliptical production of sentences.[6]

Pragmatics is also concerned with language production in an actual situation such as in the conversational exchange between interlocutors (people involved in a conversation, speaking, listening and thus interacting with each other). In this context we will learn that in order to express a concept we may never actually use any words that refer to this concept.

1.3 Key Terms

systematicity of language	
creativity of language	
Langue / Parole	
Competence / Performance	
game analogy	
grammar	
prescriptive / prescriptivism	
descriptive / descriptivism	
well-formedness	
diachronic	

---

[6] i.e. sentences that are not complete in a prescriptively grammatical sense.

synchronic	
microlinguistics	
macrolinguistics	
idealised speaker-listener	
graphology	
phonetics	
phonology	
morphology	
semantics	
syntax	
pragmatics	

1.4 Exercises and questions

1. Using the *game analogy*,
    a. what is the *de Saussurian* concept for an individual game that is played?
    b. what is the Chomskyan term for the rules of the game?
    c. what would the term *parole* correspond with in Chomskyan terms?

2. Language is both systematic and creative.
    a. Which concepts show the systematic nature of language?
    b. Illustrate in what way language is creative.

3. If you see a book with the title *English Grammar for Foreign Language Learners* what type of grammar would you expect?

4. Which approach to the study of language do you expect from the following book titles:
    a. *African-American Vernacular English: developments since the Second World War*
       diachronic / descriptive
    b. *The Language of Gaming Chat Rooms*
    c. *English from Beowulf to the Canterbury Tales*
    d. *Accents and Speech Styles of Beatles Songs from 1962 till 1970.*

5. What can you say about these utterances?
    a. did he go yet?
    b. has he goed yet?
    c. he gone yet?

6. In the following identify what kinds of language you are dealing with and what the cues are that tell you this.
    a. … The soil tends to be warmer which promotes root growth, and — unlike with spring planting — there's not the potential of a long, hot, dry summer facing the young upstarts.
    b. Turn the idle speed adjuster screw next to the throttle cam with a flat head screwdriver until the engine idles smoothly without stumbling at the lowest possible engine revolutions per minute. Turn the screw clockwise to reduce idle speed and counterclockwise to increase idle speed.
    c. … the knight's unique, non-straight pattern of movement creates two advantages: it allows a knight to attack other pieces without fear of being captured by them; and it enables a knight to make jumps and deliver threats that are surprising to the eye and so are easy to overlook.
    d. Play the Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy soundtrack and the NAD glides through the elegant and mournful music with a good attention to detail. Play the track Esterhase, and each note is delivered with precision and subtlety.

1.5 References

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2 Sounds of language I: Phonetics

2.1 Introduction: Phonetics vs. phonology

Podcast 3

> **What you know/can do after working through Chapter 2**
>
> - You know the terms needed to describe consonants and vowels
> - You can write out the IPA symbols for the speech sounds of English from the descriptions of consonants and vowels with the above terms
> - You can transcribe simple English words into IPA including stress markers.

We can look at the study of how language sounds in different ways, firstly, in terms of the individual speech sounds, how they are produced, transmitted and heard, and, secondly, in the ways in which these speech sounds are realised and combined in a specific language. Although the borderline between the two areas is fluid and there are overlaps, we can say that the former is the focus of **phonetics**, the latter is what **phonology** deals with (see Chapter 3).

Given that we can look at individual speech sounds in terms of how they are *produced*, how they are *transmitted* and how they are *heard*, we make a distinction between three types of phonetics **articulatory**, **acoustic** and **auditory**. In this course we will focus on articulatory phonetics as this field can be explored without complex equipment. It relies largely on careful self-observation, a very useful skill in many branches of linguistics.

There are two issues we will focus on in this present chapter: how speech sounds can be represented and, related to this, how they are produced and thus how we can describe them.

2.2 Representing spoken language

The orthography (writing system) of any written language has evolved over time but it rarely does so in a systematic manner. Consider that English has always been an acquisitive language (indeed, most language are in order to keep up with the needs of new concepts entering into the discourse), which has led to new words being introduced into the lexicon. Sometimes the spelling has been "anglified" sometimes it has not.
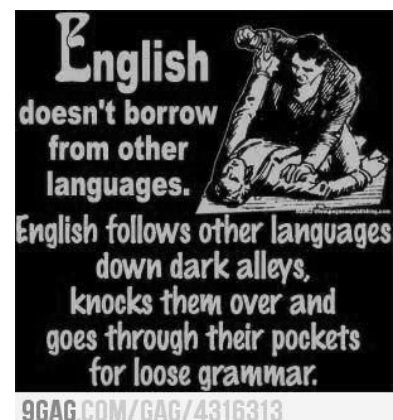

Figure 2-1 English as a "magpie" language; perhaps it would be more apt to say, however, that English acquires loose vocabulary, which explains the orthographic vagaries.

Pronunciation has changed over time, spelling may or may not have followed suit. This

Figure 2-2 An example for the vagaries of English spelling

means that spelling in English is notoriously unpredictable. The playwright and activist George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), whose play *Pygmalion*, shows his interest in language, in particular phonetics/phonology and class, was fundamentally concerned with this. He was a keen supporter of the spelling reform for English and is often credit with suggesting that the word "ghoti" can be pronounced as [＿＿＿＿＿＿＿] (although according to Zimmer 2010, there is little evidence for him being the first author to use this example. However, the spelling could also indicate a word whose pronunciation would be completely silent.

More examples for the inconsistency between English orthography and pronunciation can be shown in the excerpt from a well-known poem called "The Chaos" by Dutch writer Gerald Nolst Trenité. What the whole poem shows is that different spellings can have the same pronunciation and the same spelling can have very different pronunciation.

If we want to study a language we are not familiar with, one of the first things we do is to learn how words are pronounced. However, the question is how this pronunciation is represented. The following list is taken from a Peruvian book called *Apprenda Ingles en 15 dias*.

The Chaos

Dearest creature in creation,
Study English pronunciation.
I will teach you in my verse
Sounds like corpse, corps, horse, and worse.
I will keep you, Susy, busy,
Make your head with heat grow dizzy.
Tear in eye, your dress will tear.
So shall I! Oh hear my prayer.

Just compare heart, beard, and heard,
Dies and diet, lord and word,
Sword and sward, retain and Britain.
(Mind the latter, how it's written.)
Now I surely will not plague you
With such words as plaque and ague.
But be careful how you speak:
Say break and steak, but bleak and streak;
Cloven, oven, how and low,
Script, receipt, show, poem, and toe.
 ……………………..

Finally, which rhymes with enough --
Though, through, plough, or dough, or cough?
Hiccough has the sound of cup.
My advice is to give up!

Figure 2-3 The Chaos showing more vagaries of English spelling

Jueves (9)		zórsdei
estaciones		sísons
verano		samer
otoño		ótom, fol
invierno		uínter
quarto		forz
quinto		fifz
sexton		sicsz
el fuego (13)		di-fáia
el agua		di-uótoe
la tierra		di-oerz
el aire		di-ar
serrucho o serrote (14)		jammer
carnicero (20)		buchoe
cigarrera		sígar-ques

Table 2-1 English Phrase Book with pronunciation based on Peruvian Spanish

Un Petit d'un Petit

Un petit d'un petit

S'étonne aux Halles

Un petit d'un petit

Ah! degrés te fallent

Indolent qui ne sort cesse

Indolent qui ne se mène

Qu'importe un petit d'un petit

Tout Gai de Reguennes.

This problem can also be seen if we look at a text in a language we are familiar with, but given in the orthography that would correspond to the pronunciation in another. In Figure 2-4 a well-known English nursery rhyme is presented using French orthography; what it is becomes obvious if we read the poem out loud and with French pronunciation.

What these examples demonstrate is that if we use the orthography of a given language to represent how another language is pronounced, we create several problems:

Problem	Example	to represent
1. The language uses more than one letter to represent one sound.	(R)eguenne	
2. The language uses one letter to represent different sounds in the other language.	ótom, fol zórsdei	
3. The language does not have an equivalent for a specific speech sound in the other language.	Zorsdei / jamer sígar-ques	
4. A combination of letters to represent a sound in one language is different from the sound represented by the same combination in the other language.	buch<u>oe</u>	

Table 2-2 Problems of using one language to represent speech sounds of another language (Spanish or French for English)

Clearly then, no orthography of any one language will work as a guide to the pronunciation of another language whose sound system we might want to present. This means that if we need to represent the speech sounds of any given language, we need to have a system for writing speech sounds that fulfils four criteria:

	Criterion	Problem
		1/2
		3
		1-4
		1-4

Table 2-3 Criteria for a workable alphabet to represent speech sounds

2.3 How to describe speech sounds

Traditionally we differentiate between ***consonants*** and ***vowels***. Consonants occur together with another sound (hence the name which comes from Latin *consonare* "to sound along/with") and vowels carry sound by themselves they are "vocal" (which is the root of

the word). In our discussion we start with consonants because they are relatively easy to describe, even though, as we shall see, they are relatively complex in terms of their features. We will then have a look at what vowels are and how we can describe them, which is less clear-cut as any researcher into the pronunciation of dialects will point out. The differences between an /a/ sound in different Swiss dialects can be really quite remarkable and distinctive (consider how people from St. Gallen would pronounce "Sanggalle" vs. Bernese "Sanggaue")

2.3.1 Consonants

We can visualise the production of consonants (and to a certain degree also vowels) by considering how notes are created on a musical instrument, in particular on a wind instrument like a saxophone. Firstly, we need an energy input to initiate the sound, secondly, we need an element that can be made to vibrate and thus create the sound, thirdly, we use certain valves to vary the sound and lastly we need a resonance body to amplify the sound.

Figure 2-5 Sound production on a saxophone

Therefore we consider four elements as being general part of speech sound production:

2.3.1.1 Initiation: Air

If we put the tip of our tongue behind the upper front teeth and breath out (or even in) with our lips parted, we produce a consonant sound, the sound being [＿＿＿＿＿]. Keeping our tongue, our teeth and lips in the same position, but stopping the airflow results in the immediate termination of the sound. In this way we can see that one important ingredient in the production of a speech sound is the airflow.

For the vast majority of speech sounds the airflow comes from the lungs, which means these speech sounds are *pulmonic* (from lat. *pulmo*, lung), and the speech sound is produced when the air flows outward, i.e. the airflow is *egressive* (from lat. *egressus*, going out). However, there are other sources of air, and the airflow can go in the opposite direction. For instance, by pushing up the Adam's apple, the so-called voice box, upwards, air is also pressed outwards, which is another way to produce an airflow. Such speech sounds do not occur in Western European languages and are relatively rare; they are called *ejectives*. Finally a third way in which airflow can be initiated works as follows: we create a vacuum behind our lips, in the area at the side or on the tongue. By pulling the soft area at the roof of the mouth, known as the *velum*, backwards, we increase the pressure in this vacuum, which is then suddenly filled with air flowing into the mouth with explosive force, creating what is known as a click sound. Such sounds are *ingressive*, as the air flows inward, and, because they use the velum, they are called *velaric clicks*. A pecked kiss is one such sound, another is the sound we may make with the tip of our tongue and the back

of the teeth or the teeth ridge when we disapprove of something or the clicking sound we make at the side of our mouths when we want a horse to get going.

2.3.1.2 Vibration: Phonation, voice

There are two ways in which we can pronounce most consonants. We can feel the difference if we put our fingertips or the palms of our hands on our Adam's apple, our voice box, the so called *larynx* and produce the /z/ sound "buzz" and then the /s/ sound in "bus". The larynx plays a central role in breathing and speech. In rather simplistic terms, it has a lid on the top and two membranes, the *vocal cords* inside that can close almost completely in the middle or remain open so that air can pass through unhindered.

In terms of breathing it has two functions:

– it controls of the airflow during breathing
– it protects the windpipe from liquids or food morsels going down "the wrong hole"

In speech production it clearly has an important function that we have already

Figure 2-6 Vocal cords open during breathing and voiceless consonants (left) vs. closed for voiced consonants (right)

encountered in the comparison of the /s/ and /z/ sounds in "bus" and "buzz": It is responsible for the production of specific sound "colourings" in speech.

For our consideration the vocal cords (Figure 2-6) are probably the most important part of the larynx. They consist of a right and left cord, forming a "V" when viewed from above. During speech the vocal cords are brought close together. As the air passes by the closed vocal cords, they vibrate like reeds on a musical instrument and produce a vibration. This is known as *voice*. If it is present, in other words if there is vibration, we talk about a *voiced*, if it is absent about a *voiceless* consonant.

2.3.1.3 Manner and place of articulation

These are strictly speaking two parameters but they are closely related, which makes it acceptable to discuss them together. To return to the analogy with the saxophone, the way in which you press the valves and which valves are pressed affects how the note sounds. The same is true for consonants: the way in which and where they are produced clearly distinguishes one from the other.

2.3.1.3.1 Places of Articulation

Underlying all our considerations is the relative closure or opening somewhere along the tract from larynx to lips that creates the actual speech sounds. Such openings or closures are formed by what we call *articulators*, for instance, the tongue, the teeth, the roof of the mouth, the lips, etc. We can distinguish between *hard* or *immobile* and *soft* or *mobile articulators*. Closures or approximations are formed by mobile articulators touching or

approaching immobile ones except if both lips or tongue and the velum, the soft palate at the back of the mouth, are involved. Fig 3-7 shows all the articulators with numbers and the resonating cavities (to which we will return below) with letters, which tab 3-4 lists. The soft/mobile articulators are marked with an asterisk.

	articulator (* soft)	descriptive adjective
1*		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6*		
7*		
8		
9		
10		
11*		
a		
b		
c		
d		
e		
Resonation chambers or cavities		
A		
B		
C		

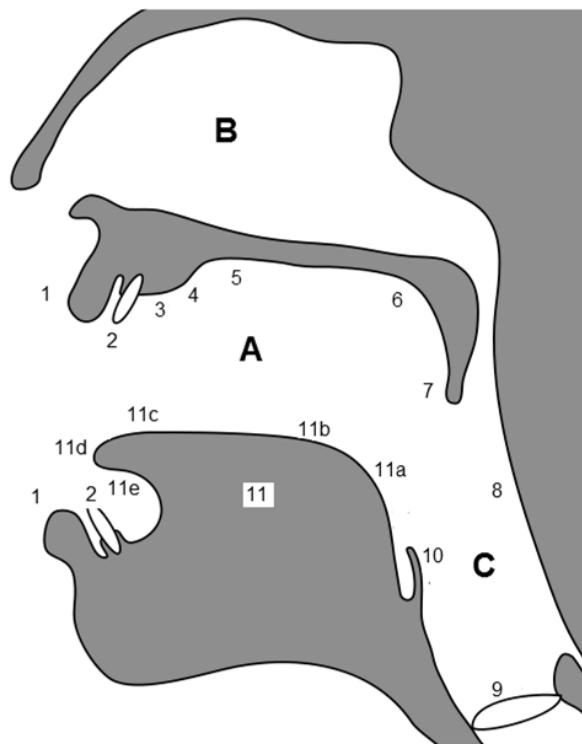Table 2-4 Articulators and Resonators

Figure 2-7 Places of articulation and resonating chambers/cavities

When we describe consonants we always mention where they are created and which articulators are involved; for this we use the adjective form.

2.3.1.3.2 *Manner of Articulation*

Articulators can be involved in range of approximation, from total closure with a release resulting in a small explosion of air via the forming of a narrow opening, which creates a turbulence in the air stream, a kind of friction of air and the articulatory elements involved in forming the opening mentioned, to a mere approximation of the articulators resulting in a sound that has almost vowel-like quality.[7] Let us examine the various types of consonants

---

[7] Vowels, as we shall see, are also produced by an approximation of articulators, but the opening here is relatively large and offers rather little constriction, certainly none comparable to the constrictions of consonants.

resulting from relative closure or opening in turns, starting with a complete obstruction and finishing with types of consonants resulting from a mere approximation.
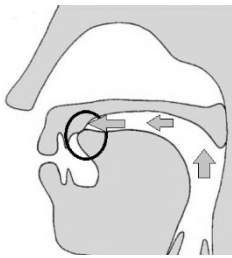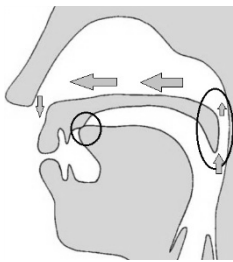

Figure 2-8 /t/ /d/

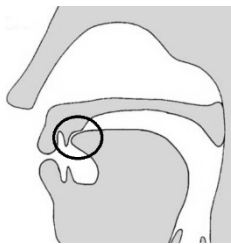1. [＿＿＿＿＿＿] or [＿＿＿＿＿] are created by a complete closure formed by the articulators, behind which air pressure builds up and is released with a burst. These speech sounds are very short and generally have a low level of sound. They can be voiceless or voiced. The velum is up, thereby blocking any air escaping through the nose; these speech sounds are characterised by being produced in the oral cavity. (cf. Figure 2-8)[8]

Figure 2-9 /n/ (sound produced in the nasal cavity)

2. [＿＿＿＿＿＿] are a second group. Like in the first group there is a total obstruction between articulators so no air can escape through the mouth. The central difference between these speech sounds and the previous group, however, is that they are produced with the velum down so the air can escape through the nose (cf. Figure 2-9). In contrast to the first group, also characterised by a total blockage of air in the mouth, these speech sounds can be as long as the speaker has breath. Furthermore, in difference to group 1 these speech sounds are characterised by being accompanied by voice.[9]

Figure 2-10 /s/ /z/

3. [＿＿＿＿＿＿] are the result of a narrow passage in the air stream, an obstruction through which air can pass, creating a turbulence which results in the creation of this kind of speech sound. As above, these consonants can be voiceless or voiced, but in contrast they can be as long as the speaker has breath to hold them. If they are produced in the alveolar and post-alveolar region, they are characterised by a hissing sound and are therefore called [＿＿＿＿＿＿]. As above, the velum blocks any air escaping through the nose and the sounds are produced in the oral cavity. (cf. Figure 2-10)

4. [＿＿＿＿＿＿] or [＿＿＿＿＿] are created by the air stream getting a soft articulator to vibrate. One example, not used in normal Western European languages is the bilabial [＿＿＿＿] or [＿＿＿＿], which is the sound children often make when imitating a car. Similarly in Italian the /r/ sound is usually a [＿＿＿＿/＿＿＿＿] in the alveolar region as it may be in Scots. In some (Eastern) Swiss dialects and in the way in which Bernese upper classes (used to) pronounce the /r/ it is produced by a vibrating uvula. Like group 2 they are usually pronounced with voice.

5. [＿＿＿＿] are a type of speech sounds created by a single and very short contact between the tip of the tongue or possible the tongue bent back (though not in English) and the alveolar dam. They are a minimal interruption of sound usually

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[8] All illustrations adapted from Mannell *et al* (2009)

[9] Although they can be pronounced with almost no voice (devoiced), especially at the end of a word.

used between two vowels. A typical example is the American pronunciation of the /t/ in city.

6. _____ are the combination of two sounds, the first belonging to group 1 and the second, produced in the same region or immediately next to it, belonging to the third group. In effect, in English we only encounter them in the pronunciation of the letter *j* in *jam* or in a *ch* as in *church*.[10] As the example shows, they can be either voiced or voiceless.
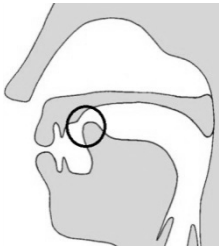
7. _____ are produced when the articulators approach each other, but do not get close enough to create an air turbulence. They are relatively close in their pronunciation to vowels (although there the distance between the articulators is even greater), which is the reason why they are sometimes referred to as _____. It comes as no surprise that they carry voice. English uses three: the /w/ in well, the /r/ in *read* (see Figure 2-11)and the /y/ in *yard*.

Figure 2-11 /r/ as in *read*.

2.3.1.3.3 *Central vs. lateral articulation*

All the groups from 1 to 7 are characterised by the airstream passing **central**ly through the mouth, which is the usual direction for the air flow. However, some speech sounds are produced at the side of the mouth.

8. For English there is another type belonging to group 7, but unlike the ones in that group it is produced on the side of the tongue, whose tip is in contact with the alveolar damn. This sound, the /l/ is called a _____ _____.

Figure 2-12 /l/ with the airstream passing on both sides of the tongue.

2.3.1.4 Descriptive parameters for consonants

Our discussion so far has shown that we can describe consonants in terms of five parameters:

1. the _____

2. the _____

3. the _____

4. the _____

5. the _____

6. the _____

---

[10] The borderline between these and normal juxtapositions of, e.g. a /t/ and an /s/ in *cuts* is debatable in articulatory terms but they often are perceived by native speaker as one speech sound (which they are not), whereas the /ts/ is not a speech sound in English and results from adding a plural –s to a word ending in an unvoiced plosive.

Out of these parameters some will always be mentioned (3 and 4), some will be mentioned if there is a possible contrast (2) and some are only mentioned when the exceptional occurs (1, 5 and 6).

2.3.1.5 Transcribing consonants

As we saw earlier, in order to represent pronunciation accurately we need an internationally accepted, language-independent writing system that has one exclusive sign for every sound in any language. The IPA, the International Phonetic Alphabet, fulfils all these requirements. In Table 2-1 we have on overview of all the symbols for the speech sounds with the ones used in English and related variants (with the addition of some that are important for other Western European languages) to be filled in.

	labial				apical				apical / laminal				dorsal				radical				glottal	
	bilabial		labio dental		Dental		Alveolar		post-alveolar		retroflex		palatal		velar		uvular		pha-ryngeal		glottal	
	V-	V+	V-	V+	V-	V+	V-	V+	V-	V+	V-	V+	V-	V+	V-	V+	V-	V+	V-	V+	V-	V+
plosive											ʈ	ɖ	c	ɟ			q	ɢ				
nasal				ɱ								ɳ		ɲ				ɴ				
trill		ʙ																ʀ				
tap or flap												ɾ										
fricative	ɸ	β	f	v							ʂ	ʐ		j		ɣ			ħ	ʕ		ɦ
lateral fricative							ɬ	ɮ														
approximant				ʋ								ɻ				ɰ						
lateral approximant												ɭ		ʎ		ʟ						

not in the table: /w/[11]

Table 2-5 The pulmonic vowels in IPA

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