LINGUISTICS: MEANING AND ETYMOLOGY

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. It examines how language is formed, structured, used, and interpreted by speakers.

Linguistics is scientific because it uses:

- observation
- analysis
- patterns
- rules and systems

to understand how human language works.

Etymology

The word **linguistics** comes from:

- **Latin**: *lingua* = "tongue" or "language"
- **Suffix**: *-istics* (from Greek *-istikos*) = "study of" or "science of"

So, **linguistics literally means "the study of language."**

PHONETICS

Phonetics is the branch of linguistics that studies the physical sounds of human speech—how they are produced, transmitted, and perceived.

It focuses on the actual sounds of human language, not the meaning of words.

Three Main Areas of Phonetics

1. Articulatory Phonetics

What it studies:
How speech sounds are **produced** by the mouth, tongue, lips, teeth, and vocal cords.

Example:

- When you say **/p/** → your lips close then release air.
- When you say **/s/** → your tongue is near your teeth and air flows continuously.

Why it matters:
It helps us understand how to pronounce sounds correctly.

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2. Acoustic Phonetics

What it studies:
The **sound waves** created when we speak.

Example:
When you say "aaa," the sound wave has a certain **pitch**, **frequency**, and **loudness**.

Why it matters:
It helps in sound recording, speech technology, and speech analysis.

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3. Auditory Phonetics

What it studies:
How the **ear** and the **brain** hear and interpret speech sounds.

Example:
Why Filipinos sometimes hear **/f/** as **/p/** or **/v/** as **/b/**—the brain categorizes sounds differently depending on our language background.

Why it matters:
It helps in teaching pronunciation and correcting misunderstandings in communication.

Quick Analogy

Think of speech sounds like music:

- **Articulatory phonetics** = how the musician plays (mouth movements)
- **Acoustic phonetics** = the sound waves produced
- **Auditory phonetics** = how the audience hears the music

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

Definition:
IPA is a **universal system of symbols** used to represent speech sounds of all languages. Each symbol corresponds to **one distinct sound (phoneme)**.

Purpose of IPA:

- Helps learners **pronounce words accurately** in any language
- Avoids spelling confusion
- Provides a **standardized system** for linguists

IPA and Phonetics

- **Phonetics** studies the **physical sounds of speech**—how they are produced, transmitted, and heard.
- **IPA** is a **tool to represent these actual sounds accurately**, regardless of the language.

PHONOLOGY

Phonology is the branch of linguistics that studies **how sounds function in a particular language**. Unlike phonetics, which is concerned with **the physical production and perception of sounds**, phonology looks at the **patterns, rules, and organization of sounds** in a language.

- **Key idea:** It's not just about the sounds themselves, but **how they work together to convey meaning**.
- **Example:** In English, /p/ and /b/ are different sounds (phonemes) because changing /p/ to /b/ changes the meaning: **"pat" vs. "bat."** Phonology studies these kinds of contrasts and patterns.

Components of Phonology:

1. **Phonemes** – the smallest units of sound that can change meaning.
    - Example: /k/ and /g/ in "cat" vs. "gat" (if "gat" were a word).
2. **Allophones** – variations of a phoneme that do **not** change meaning.
    - Example: The /p/ in "spin" vs. "pin" is pronounced slightly differently but still considered the same phoneme.
3. **Syllable structure** – how sounds combine to form syllables.
4. **Stress, intonation, and tone** – patterns that affect meaning or emphasis.

Why Phonology Matters

1. **Language Learning:** Helps learners pronounce words correctly and understand how sounds can change meaning.
    - Example: Mispronouncing "ship" vs. "sheep" in English can confuse listeners.
2. **Speech and Communication:** Explains why certain speech errors happen and how dialects or accents differ.
3. **Linguistic Analysis:** Essential for writing dictionaries, teaching pronunciation, and studying language change.
4. **Technology:** Crucial in speech recognition systems, text-to-speech programs, and AI language processing.

In simple terms:
Phonology is like the **grammar of sounds**. Just as grammar tells us how words combine to make sentences, phonology tells us how sounds combine to make **meaningful speech**.

MORPHOLOGY: MEANING AND DISCUSSION

Morphology is the branch of linguistics that studies **the structure of words** and **how words are formed** from smaller units called **morphemes**.

- **Key idea:** Morphology looks at the **building blocks of words** and the rules for combining them.
- **Example:** The word **"unhappiness"** can be broken down into:
    - **un-** (prefix, meaning "not")
    - **happy** (root word)
    - **-ness** (suffix, meaning "state of")

Components of Morphology

1. **Morphemes** – the smallest units of meaning in a language.
    - **Free morphemes** – can stand alone as words: *book, run, happy*
    - **Bound morphemes** – cannot stand alone; attach to other morphemes: *un-, -ed, -s*
2. **Types of Morphemes**
    - **Prefixes:** added at the beginning (*un-* in *undo*)
    - **Suffixes:** added at the end (*-ing* in *running*)
    - **Infixes:** inserted within a word (rare in English, more common in other languages)
    - **Inflectional morphemes:** change grammatical form without changing meaning (*cat → cats*)
    - **Derivational morphemes:** change meaning or part of speech (*happy → happiness*)
3. **Word Formation Processes:**
    - **Compounding:** combining words (*tooth + brush = toothbrush*)
    - **Affixation:** adding prefixes or suffixes (*teach → teacher*)
    - **Reduplication:** repeating a word or part of it (common in Tagalog: *araw-araw*)
    - **Conversion:** changing a word's class without adding morphemes (*run (verb) → a run (noun)*)

Why Morphology Matters

1. **Vocabulary Building:** Understanding morphemes helps students guess meanings of new words.
    - Example: *biography* = *bio* (life) + *graphy* (writing) → "writing about life."
2. **Grammar and Syntax:** Morphology explains how words change form to fit tense, number, or gender.
3. **Language Learning:** Helps learners understand irregular forms and word patterns.
    - Example: *child → children, go → went*
4. **Linguistic Analysis & Technology:** Important for natural language processing, spell-checkers, and AI text analysis.

In simple terms:
Morphology is like the **Lego of words** — it studies how small pieces (morphemes) fit together to build larger, meaningful units (words).

Two Main Types of Morphemes

1. Free Morphemes

These morphemes **can stand alone** as words.

Examples:

- *book*
- *run*
- *happy*
- *teach*

These words already have meaning, even without being attached to anything else.

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2. Bound Morphemes

These morphemes **cannot stand alone**.
They must be **attached** to another morpheme to have meaning.

Examples:

- Prefixes: *un-*, *re-*, *pre-*, *dis-*
- Suffixes: *-s*, *-ed*, *-ing*, *-ful*, *-less*

They modify the meaning of the word.

Subtypes of Bound Morphemes

A. Derivational Morphemes

They **change the meaning** or **change the word class** (part of speech).

Examples:

- *happy* → *unhappy* (meaning changed)
- *teach* → *teacher* (verb → noun)
- *hope* → *hopeful* (noun → adjective)

B. Inflectional Morphemes

They **do NOT change the core meaning** or word class.
They only show **grammar** such as tense, plurality, comparison, or possession.

Examples:

- *cat* → *cats* (plural)
- *walk* → *walked* (past tense)
- *big* → *bigger* (comparative)
- *John* → *John's* (possessive)

English has **8 inflectional morphemes**:

- **-s** (plural)
- **-'s** (possessive)
- **-s** (3rd person singular)
- **-ed** (past tense)
- **-en/-ed** (past participle)
- **-ing** (progressive)
- **-er** (comparative)
- **-est** (superlative)

Why Morphemes Matter (Importance in Linguistics)

- Help you **understand word formation**
- Improve **vocabulary** and **spelling**
- Important in **grammar** (tense, plural, comparison)
- Helps in **language teaching**, **reading**, and **linguistic analysis**

FOUR TYPES OF AFFIXES

1. Prefix (before the root)

Definition: Added at the **beginning** of a word to change its meaning.
Relatable Examples:

- *un-* + *happy* → *unhappy* (not happy; like when your class is canceled vs. when it's not)
- *re-* + *watch* → *rewatch* (watch again; like rewatching your favorite Netflix series)
- *pre-* + *order* → *preorder* (order before release; like a new phone or game)

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2. Suffix (after the root)

Definition: Added at the **end** of a word; can change meaning or part of speech.
Relatable Examples:

- *teach* + *-er* → *teacher* (person who teaches; literally your instructor!)
- *run* + *-ing* → *running* (action happening now; like jogging in the morning)
- *friend* + *-ship* → *friendship* (state or quality of being friends; like your best friend bond)

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3. Infix (inside the root)

Definition: Inserted **inside** a word; mostly for emphasis or in some languages.
Relatable Examples:

- Tagalog: *sulat* → *sumulat* (to write; think of adding "um" to indicate action)

Infixes are **rare in English**, but they exist in some languages like Filipino/Tagalog, Bontoc, and Indonesian.

Infixes in Tagalog (the best examples)

Tagalog uses infixes to show **verb aspects**, **focus**, or **intensity**.

Common Tagalog Infixes

Infix	Example	Explanation
-um-	*sulat* → ***sumulat***	"to write" → "wrote / writing"
-in-	*sulat* → ***sinulat***	"write" → "written"
-an-	*ganda* → ***ginandahan***	"make something beautiful"

How it works:
The infix is inserted **after the first consonant** of the root word.

Infixes in Bontoc (Northern Philippines)

Bontoc uses **-um-** to create agent nouns.

Example:

- *fikas* ("strong") → **fumikas** ("to be strong")
- *kilad* ("red") → **kumilad** ("to become red")

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4. Circumfix (around the root)

Definition: Surrounds the root with an affix; less common in English.
Relatable Examples:

- English approximation: "en-light-en" → *enlighten* (en- before + -en after; to make someone understand better)

SYNTAX: MEANING AND DISCUSSION

Syntax is the branch of linguistics that studies **how words combine to form phrases, clauses, and sentences** in a language.

- In other words, syntax is about the **rules and patterns that govern sentence structure**.
- While morphology studies **words**, syntax studies **how words fit together** to create meaning.

Key Ideas

1. **Word Order Matters:**
    - In English, the usual order is **Subject + Verb + Object (SVO)**.
    - Example:
        - *Jessa (S) eats (V) rice (O).* → Correct
        - *Eats Jessa rice.* → Wrong / Confusing
2. **Phrases are Word Groups:**
    - **Noun Phrase (NP):** a person, place, thing, or idea
        - Example: *The tall man*
    - **Verb Phrase (VP):** the action or state
        - Example: *is running fast*
    - **Full Sentence:** combine NP + VP → *The tall man is running fast.*
3. **Clauses:**
    - **Independent clause:** a complete thought
        - Example: *I like pizza.*
    - **Dependent clause:** cannot stand alone
        - Example: *because it is cheesy*
    - Combine them: *I like pizza because it is cheesy.*
4. **Agreement (Concord):**
    - The subject and verb must **match**:
        - *He runs fast.* (singular)
        - *They run fast.* (plural)

Why Syntax Matters

1. **Clear Communication:** Proper sentence structure prevents misunderstanding.
2. **Language Learning:** Helps learners form grammatically correct sentences.
3. **Writing & Speaking:** Improves clarity, style, and coherence.
4. **Linguistics & Technology:** Essential for parsing sentences and grammar checkers.

SEMANTICS: THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE

Semantics is the study of **meaning in language**. It looks at **what words, phrases, and sentences mean**, and **how context affects meaning**.

- Unlike **syntax**, which is about **structure**, semantics is about **meaning**.
- Unlike **morphology**, which is about **word forms**, semantics is about **what the words signify**.

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1. Lexical Semantics (Word Meaning)

Lexical semantics focuses on **individual words** and their meanings.

Key Concepts:

- **Denotation:** The **literal dictionary meaning** of a word.
    - Example: *Dog* → a domesticated animal that barks.
- **Connotation:** The **emotional or cultural meaning** a word carries.
    - Example: *Dog* → loyalty (positive), or "mutt" → negative.
- **Polysemy:** A word has **multiple related meanings**.
    - Example: *Book* → a physical object, or *to book* → reserve a ticket.
- **Homonymy:** A word has **multiple unrelated meanings**.
    - Example: *Bank* → financial institution OR side of a river.

Relatable Example:

- *Mouse* → a small rodent OR a computer device (context tells meaning).

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2. Sentential or Compositional Semantics (Sentence Meaning)

This studies how the **meaning of a sentence comes from the meaning of its words** combined according to syntax.

Example:

- *The cat chased the mouse.* → clear meaning (cat is active, mouse is passive)
- *The mouse chased the cat.* → completely different meaning (unexpected or humorous)

Observation: Changing the **word order** or **context** can drastically change meaning.

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3. Ambiguity in Semantics

Some words or sentences can be **ambiguous**, meaning they have **more than one possible interpretation**.

Types:

- **Lexical ambiguity:** A word has multiple meanings.
    - Example: *I went to the bank.* → financial bank or river bank?
- **Structural (syntactic) ambiguity:** Sentence structure creates multiple meanings.
    - Example: *I saw the man with a telescope.*
        1. I used a telescope to see the man.
        2. I saw a man who was holding a telescope.

Relatable Example:

- *Visiting relatives can be annoying.*
    - Are the relatives visiting me?
    - Or is it annoying to visit relatives?

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4. Figurative Language and Semantics

Semantics also studies **non-literal meaning**: metaphors, idioms, and expressions.

Examples:

- Metaphor: *Time is money.* → Time is valuable, not literally money.
- Idiom: *Kick the bucket.* → To die.
- Hyperbole: *I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.* → Exaggeration for effect.

Relatable Example:

- *Break a leg* → good luck in a performance (not literal injury).

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5. Why Semantics Matters

1. **Communication Clarity:**
    - Correct meaning ensures listeners understand exactly what you intend.
    - Example: Misunderstanding *bank* could lead to confusion in directions or instructions.

2. **Language Learning:**
    - Helps learners understand words in different contexts.
3. **Literature & Media Analysis:**
    - Crucial for interpreting texts, poems, or advertisements.
4. **Technology & AI:**
    - Helps chatbots, translation software, and voice assistants understand context.
    - Example: Google Translate must choose the correct meaning of *bat* (animal or sports equipment).

PRAGMATICS: MEANING AND DISCUSSION

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies **how context affects the meaning of language**.

- Pragmatics considers **speaker intention, social context, cultural norms, and implied meaning**.

Key Idea:

- The same sentence can mean different things depending on **who says it, to whom, where, and how**.

Key Concepts in Pragmatics

1. **Context Matters**
    - The meaning of a sentence often depends on **situation, time, place, or people involved**.
    - Example:
        - *"Can you pass the salt?"*
            - Literally: asking if someone **has the ability** to pass salt.
            - In context: **a polite request** to actually pass the salt.
2. **Speech Acts**
    - Actions performed through language: **asking, requesting, apologizing, promising, commanding**.
    - Example:
        - *"I apologize for being late."* → Speech act of **apologizing**.
        - *"I promise to help you."* → Speech act of **promising**.
3. **Implicature (Implied Meaning)**
    - When a speaker **implies something without saying it directly**.
    - Example:
        - *"It's cold in here."*
            - Could imply: *"Please close the window"* without directly saying it.
4. **Deixis (Pointing Words)**
    - Words that depend on context to have meaning: **this, that, here, there, I, you**.

- Example:
    - *"I'll meet you there at 5."* → "There" only makes sense if you know the place from context.

5. **Politeness and Social Norms**
    - Pragmatics studies how language changes according to **formality, culture, or relationships**.
    - Example:
        - With a friend: *"Give me the book."*
        - With a teacher: *"Could you please give me the book?"*

Why Pragmatics Matters

1. **Effective Communication:**
    - Helps avoid misunderstandings by interpreting **intended meaning**, not just literal meaning.
2. **Social Interaction:**
    - Guides **polite, appropriate, and culturally sensitive communication**.
3. **Language Learning:**
    - Essential for learners to understand **idioms, indirect requests, sarcasm, and humor**.
4. **Technology & AI:**
    - Helps develop **chatbots, virtual assistants, and translation tools** that understand context.

Examples of Pragmatics in Action

Utterance	Literal Meaning	Pragmatic Meaning / Context
"Can you open the window?"	Ability question	Polite request to open it
"Wow, you're really smart!"	Compliment	Could be sincere or sarcastic (depends on tone)
"I've got to go now."	Statement	Implies: I need to leave the conversation
"This place is a disaster."	Literal description	Could imply: We need to clean up!

Simple Analogy:

- **Semantics** = what words mean on their own.
- **Pragmatics** = what words mean **in real life situations**.
- Example:
    - Semantics: *"I am hungry."* → literal meaning = you need food.
    - Pragmatics: *"I am hungry."* → in context = maybe *"Let's eat now"* or hint to someone to cook.