

Semester III

Group B

Linguistics

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Linguistics and language

- Linguistics is the scientific study of human languages.
- Scientific study means empirical, which means a study that is based on observations.
- Traditional grammar used centuries ago as a discipline to study languages. It is prescriptive:
 - ✓ It shows you how you should speak.
 - ✓ You are not allowed to use abbreviations.
 - ✓ You should follow the rules.
- Modern linguistics is descriptive: you are free on speaking.
- The scientific study is empirical which means that is based on the observation before analysis.
- You should follow these steps in the scientific study:
 - ✓ Collecting of data (plural of datum): information.
 - ✓ Collecting of literature: everything has been written in the subject (articles, books, essays...).
 - ✓ Analysis.

The characteristics of the scientific study:

1. **Systematicness** (from the adjective systematic): the methodology that we follow in a scientific study (the procedure).

The study or the analysis must be done systematically. It must follow well define procedures. For the study of the structure of the language to be systematic, two kinds of procedures are possible:

- a) **The inductive approach**: a method of reasoning which discovers general laws from particular facts on statistics.
 - b) **The deductive method/ analysis**: moving from general facts to the particular ones.
2. **Explicitness**: defining clearly the term we are using.
 3. **Consistency**: to be regular in using symbols and phonetics: I.P.A (International Phonetic Alphabet) or A.P.A (American Phonetic Alphabet). Stick to the sound that we use.
 4. **Objectivity**: Be empirical and treating all the languages equally.

What is a language?

- The language is a mean of communication that is appropriated to humans. It is specific to human being.
- Non verbal communication (**not involving words or speech**) is not a language. There is a relationship between the form and the meaning.

The properties of language:

1. **Arbitrariness**: there is no relationship between the signifier (the form of a linguistic sign, for example its sound or its

printed form rather than the meaning it expresses) and the signified (the meaning expressed by a linguistic sign). There is no relationship between the form/ word and the meaning/ concept.

Signified (the word)



House

Signifier (the concept)



If you don't know English, you will not understand its meaning (the meaning of "the house").

In the onomatopoeic words (tick tock, boom, splash...), there is a close relationship between the form and the meaning. You can understand the meaning of these words from its pronunciation.

2. **Flexibility:** human language can able to suit new conditions or situations. It can adopt all situations. It can refer to any time: past, present and future and to any place and to all situations, whereas the animal communication is very limited in terms of time and location

3. **Discreteness:** the human language is segmental. It can be divided into morphemes (the smallest unit of meaning that a word can be divided into: the word 'like' contains one morpheme but 'un-like-ly' contains three morphemes) and phonemes (any one of the set of the smallest units of

speech in a language that distinguish one word from another. In English, the /s/ in sip and the /z/ in zip represent two different phonemes)

4. **Creativity:** constructing infinite sentences even the vocabulary is finite.

Conclusion:

- The human language is unique. It is totally different from any means of communication.
- We cannot say that animal communication is a language because it does not obey the four properties of a language.