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language is a language that developed within a community without being planned or designed. Instead, a natural language evolves gradually over time based on how the communis uses it. In contrast, constructed languages are designed intentionally. Constructed languages include languages designed for art, media, or fun, like Klingon for the Star Trek series, or for a communicative purpose, such as Esperanto, which was designed with the intention that it would be an international language that would promote peace. Constructed languages and non-human communication systems are valid and interesting objects of study. However, depending on the kinds of questions you are asking, they may or may not be able to provide the evidence you need. For example, you may be studying the properties that languages around the world have in common. A constructed language, however, may have been constructed on purpose to sound alien or be unlike human language. Even if it wasn't designed to be different on purpose, we cannot know whether the conscious choices of a language designer will result in the same kinds of patterns as subconscious language acquisition unless we study them separately and then compare. Some linguists hypothesize a genetic or biological component that underlies the human capacity for language. If this is the case, then we would expect there to be differences in the way that languages are acquired and processed across different species. In morphology and syntax, we study how to encode particular meanings with particular forms. For example, in (1) to illustrate the relationship between form and meaning. The toddler kicked the balls across the field. The form of the sentence in (1) if it is spoken, sounds similar to (2), when represented in an IPA transcription, and its meaning describes something like the image shown in Figure 1. (2) /ətədər'kɪktəbælsəkrəsəsfəld/ Figure 1. A toddler kicking a ball in a field. Photo by Paul Ney. Used under CC BY-NC-SA licence. But how do we get from the form in (2) to the meaning in Figure 1? Well, we divide up the string of sounds in (2) into morphemes and words, each of which has its own meaning. But that, alone, is not enough. The order of the words and morphemes and how they are combined also matter. Look at the examples in (3). Notice how each word has all the same words and morphemes as (1), but combined in different ways. The different combinations produce different meanings, some of which make no sense. (3) a. The balls kicked the toddler across the field. b. The field kicked the balls across the toddler. c. The kicker toddlers the balls across the field. d. The toddlers kicked the ball across the field. In morphology and syntax, we are assigning a structure to a string of sounds or signs and using that structure to determine its meaning. This structure indicates the relationships between the morphemes and words. For example, the -s plural marker on balls in (1) indicates that there is more than one ball. On its own, -s just means more than one something, but we don't know what that something is until it is part of a structure. Likewise, the morpheme kick indicates that an action of kicking is involved, but until kick is combined with the past tense marker -ed, we don't know when it happened, and unless it is combined with a subject, object, and other modifiers, we do not know who did the kicking, what was kicked, or where the kicking happened. The research is important for advancing our understanding of how language works. There are also interactions between all of the different subfields. For example, you could study how to train a computer to produce artificial speech with the correct pronunciation (phonetics, phonology, and computational linguistics), how children acquire morphology (morphology and first language acquisition), or how a word gains a special meaning within a particular community and then spreads outside of the community (lexical semantics, historical linguistics, and sociolinguistics). Morphology and syntax, as well, can be studied in combination with any other subfield. Here are some examples: Semantics is the study of meaning. One important idea in semantics is compositionality, which is the observation that the meaning of a sentence is derived by the meaning of its parts and the way that they are combined. This is very closely related to the study of morphosyntax, since morphosyntax is what determines how they are combined. Phonetics and phonology The subfields of phonetics and phonology intersect with morphology through the phenomenon of allomorphy. A morpheme may be pronounced in different ways depending on its phonological context. We will learn more about this in Chapter 12. The subfields of phonetics and phonology also intersect with syntax through prosody. Many syntactic structures in various languages affect the prosody of the sentence. For example, in English, questions have a special rising intonation. Sociolinguistics In sociolinguistics, different dialects and language varieties are studied. Any language variety is a valuable object of study within the subfields of morphology and syntax. Some critics of the study of morphology and syntax claim that it is too narrow and too technical. However, the study of morphology and syntax is a valuable object of study within the subfields of morphology and syntax. Some of the ways we seem to process language. Anthropological linguistics Anthropological linguistics is the study of the interaction between language and culture. Different languages encode different aspects of the world directly into the grammatical structure of language. For example, some languages have grammatical categories that can be used to indicate formality or respect, while others do not. Discourse analysis In discourse analysis, linguists study how different sentences or utterances are combined into wider texts or conversations. Sometimes this involves the use of morphological or syntactic discourse markers, like oh, well, so, y'know, etc. Some syntacticians work on integrating discourse markers into syntactic structure, while morphologists might analyze their morphological structure. Computational linguistics A computational linguist might study how to program a computer to produce and interpret language in a human-like way. Although the ability of computers to manipulate language has improved by leaps and bounds, there are still some areas of difference, if you look closely. Crip linguistics Crip linguistics is not so much a subfield, but more a critical reflection on linguistics as a whole from the perspective of disability studies, challenging us to not consider any attempts at communicating to be deficient or defective. The term crip linguistics was coined by deaf linguists Octavian Robinson and Jon Henner (e.g., Henner and Robinson 2023) based on the reclaimed usage of crip in critical disability studies (e.g., McRuer 2006, Kafer 2013). In morphosyntax, we may investigate how various communicative behaviours exhibit morphological or syntactic patterning. Which subfields of linguistics are missing here? For example, how are we connected to morphology and syntax? Linguistics can be defined as the scientific study of language. The primary object of study in linguistics is natural human language. 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