BM3
Introduction to English Linguistics
Part II
Session 1: Concepts

Who am I?
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Who are you?
• Name tags?
• Your picture in Stud.IP?

Organization
• **Purpose of this class**
  - Discuss questions that arise in the lecture (Vorlesung)
  - Apply what has been learned in the lecture
  - Practice and improve basic knowledge

• **General expectations**
  - Come prepared!
  - Feel free to ask questions!
  - Quiet work atmosphere (especially towards the end of class)
Organization

• Study linguistic terms!
  good approaches:
  - flashcards
  - linguistic dictionaries (e.g. Bussmann)
  - online (Lexicon of Linguistics; U of Utrecht)
  http://www2.let.uu.nl/UiL-OTS/Lexicon/

Organization - Literature


See Handapparat for further introductory books

Any questions so far?

• Organizational
• Concerning the lecture
• Concerning this class

Recap: What is Linguistics?

• Phonetics/ Phonology
• Morphology
• Syntax
• Semantics
• Pragmatics
• Applied Linguistics
  (Historical Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Textlinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Neurolinguistics, Computational Linguistics, …)
Ferdinand de Saussure (1916): „the linguistic sign is arbitrary”

\[ \text{sign} \rightarrow \text{signified} \]

\[ \text{signifier} \rightarrow \text{signified} \]

\[ \text{FLY} \]

\[ \text{symbol} \rightarrow \text{concept} \]

signifier = the overt signal
signified = the concept that is evoked

Why is Saussure’s concept of language of interest to us?

- The „label“ for concepts is arbitrary
- We understand each other due to conventions in labeling

Semiotics – the study of signs

- What type of signs do you know?
- How can they be defined?

Symbol  Arbitrary sign; conventional
Icon     Meaning is clearly identifiable from the pictogram
Your turn!

Although sounds and meanings of most words in all languages are arbitrarily related, there are some communication systems in which the “sign” unambiguously reveal their “meaning”.

a. Describe (or draw) 5 different signs that directly show what they mean.
   
   * Example: a road sign indicating an S curve.

b. Describe any other communication system that, like language, consists of arbitrary symbols.
   
   * Ex.: traffic light, where red means stop and green means go.

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Nonarbitrary Signs (icons)

Arbitrary signs (symbols)
A small set of words in languages are onomatopoeic. That is, their sounds "imitate" what they refer to.

• Find such onomatopoeic words.
• Are they truly non-arbitrary?

Consider these 2 statements:

I learned a new word today.
I learned a new sentence today.

⇒ Do you think these 2 statements are equally probable?
⇒ Why (not)?

A wolf is able to express subtle gradations of emotion by different positions of the ears, lips, and tail. There are 11 postures of the tail that express such emotions as self-confidence, confident threat, lack of tension, uncertain threat, depression, defensiveness, active submission, and complete submission.

This system seems to be complex. Suppose that there were a thousand different emotions that the wolf could express in this way.

Would you then say a wolf had a language similar to a human’s? Why (not)?
Phonetics –
The Art of Articulation

Spoken language consists of individual sounds.

- How do we produce these sounds?
- What organs are involved?