

Today's topics:

- **Reading/writing vs. language**
- **Linguistics & language structure**

0. Key points today

- Phonics — *this is a teaching method*
- Spoken (signed) language vs. written language
- Linguistics
- Mental grammar
- Language diversity (vs. “standard” language)
- Phonological awareness — *this is conscious awareness of spoken language structure*

0. Course information — reminders

Welcome!

- I am **Jen Smith** [[my web site](#)]
 - Please call me “Dr. Smith” or “Prof. Smith” or “Jen”
- **Course web site:**
<https://users.castle.unc.edu/~jlsmith/ling089.html>
 - Check the “**Daily syllabus**” web page after every class to find out about readings and assignments

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1. Phonics in reading education

- RE #1: How does Hanford (2018) define **phonics**?

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- RE #1: How does Hanford (2018) define **phonics**?
 - “how to connect sounds with letters”
 - “teaching children that words are made up of parts and showing them how different letters and combinations of letters connect to the speech sounds in words”
- Round-robin discussion (go around the room):
 - Please remind me what your name is 😊
 - Do you **remember** learning phonics, either in school or elsewhere?
 - How did you **feel** about phonics, or other aspects of your early reading education?

1. Phonics in reading education

- RE #1: What are some **arguments** that Hanford (2018) presents to support her position on phonics?

2. Human language vs. writing

- Before we start looking more in depth at **reading**, we will look at some core concepts about **language**
 - What is language?

2. Human language vs. writing

- Before we start looking more in depth at **reading**, we will look at some core concepts about **language**
 - What is language?
 - a communication system
 - specific to humans
 - allows:
 - recombination of a set of elements
 - creativity
 - communication beyond the here-and-now

2. Human language vs. writing

- Written language is not the “essence” of language

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- Written language is not the “essence” of language
 - **Human spoken (signed) language acquisition** is a largely **biological, developmental** process
 - Children acquire language in societies where adults don't speak to them in a special way
 - Children's language shows “mistakes” that are not coming from adult input → they are developing their own mental grammar
 - **Reading and writing** are **cultural** developments

2. Human language vs. writing

- Spoken and written language are very different (list from Seidenberg 2017: 17–18)

Spoken language	Written language
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• evolved in humans• universal• learned via interaction• fast fading• messy, disfluent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• cultural, like money• only some people have it• explicitly taught• long lasting• can be edited / polished

3. Linguistics and mental grammar

- Linguists study **grammar** — but this doesn't mean what you might think
- Grammar: A set of rules and principles that describes what some authority thinks people "should" say or write?

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- Linguists study **grammar** — but this doesn't mean what you might think
- Grammar: A set of rules and principles that describes what some authority thinks people “should” say or write?
 - **Prescriptive** grammar
 - Useful for learning a foreign language, or learning a particular style (formal writing, ...)
 - NOT the focus of most research in linguistics

3. Linguistics and mental grammar

- Linguists study **grammar**, especially:
 - **Descriptive** grammar
 - A set or *system* of rules and principles that describes what people **do** say (and understand)
 - **Mental** grammar = **Linguistic competence**
 - A system of rules and principles that are **part of human cognition** and **cause** language behavior
 - “What do we know when we know a language?”

3. Linguistics and mental grammar

- **Linguistics is a scientific approach to language**
 - The **data**: What people say (and understand)
 - Using this data, linguists aspire to build a **model** of human **mental grammar**

3. Linguistics and mental grammar

- A human speaker (signer) has a **mental grammar** of their language that is...
 - complex
 - highly systematic (though with exceptions)
 - largely unavailable to conscious introspection
 - developed based on the language data in their environment as an infant
- “What do we know when we know a language?” — Noam Chomsky

3. Linguistics and mental grammar

- Some **core subfields** of linguistics

Phonetics:	
Phonology:	
Morphology:	
Syntax:	
Semantics:	

3. Linguistics and mental grammar

- Some **core subfields** of linguistics

Phonetics:	Physical production of speech sounds
Phonology:	Cognitive representation and patterns of speech sounds
Morphology:	Structure of words
Syntax:	Structure of phrases and sentences
Semantics:	Representation and structure of meaning

4. Linguistic diversity — language varieties

- If you are a **native speaker** of English, does your **mental grammar** judge this example to be **grammatical**? (Does this “sound normal” to you, or does it “sound funny”?)

*Feeding your cat is **different to** feeding your dog.*

4. Linguistic diversity — language varieties

- This structure is judged **ungrammatical** by most speakers of American English (it “sounds wrong”)

*Feeding your cat is **different to** feeding your dog.*

- This came from a blog called *catsofaustralia.com*

- So—
Which is **correct**, American English or Australian English?

4. Linguistic diversity — language varieties

??? But (you may say), that's not a fair question! The two kinds of English are **just different**

- An American English speaker has a mental grammar that allows *different than* [yes, really, for most of us] or *different from*, but not *different to*
 - An Australian English speaker has a mental grammar that does allow *different to*
- Both American English and Australian English speakers **have** mental grammars; they're simply **different**

4. Linguistic diversity — language varieties

This is another key idea in linguistics.

- This point can be extended to the **language variety** (sometimes called *dialect*) of **any** speech community
 - No language variety “has no grammar”
 - No language variety is any less (or more!) logical
 - Every mental grammar is systematic
- The speakers of **any language variety** can use their mental grammar to make **grammaticality judgments** about whether words, sentences, etc., are acceptable **in that variety**

4. Linguistic diversity — language varieties

- What is a “**standard**” or “**prestige**” language variety?
One that got lucky! (historically, socially, politically)
 - Which group was **in power** when dictionaries, style guides, curricula, etc., were made?
 - Which group did other people **want to imitate** or sound like in order to gain certain social or political advantages?
 - These are the factors that typically determine which variety (dialect) is considered the “correct” or “desirable” one in a society

4. Linguistic diversity — language varieties

- You may have **emotional reactions** to different varieties of your language, based on your own background and experience—you may like some and dislike others—that’s human nature. ***BUT!!!***
 - All varieties have a mental grammar
 - All varieties can contribute to our understanding of the range of possible human languages
 - All varieties deserve respect; **none are “wrong”**
- For **any variety of any language**, we can analyze it and determine its linguistic properties

4. Linguistic diversity — language varieties

- Is it **useful** to be able to speak and write so-called “standard” or “mainstream” American English?
 - In many cases, **yes** — there are social implications of using, or not using, this variety
 - Reminder: This does **not** mean that mainstream American English is intrinsically, linguistically better
- Later in the course, we will consider: What is the role and/or relevance of **differences in language variety** for **reading education**?
 - Materials for teaching reading are typically based on “standard” English

5. Breaking down spoken words

- Now that we have spent some time thinking about
 - mental grammar
 - some differences between language and reading/writing

...let's try looking at the **sound structure** of some spoken English words

5. Breaking down spoken words

- How many **syllables** are in each of the following words?
 - (a) *love*
 - (b) *magazine*
 - (c) *anticipation*
 - (d) *boiling*

5. Breaking down spoken words

- How many **syllables** are in each of the following words?

(a) *love* 1

(b) *magazine* 3

(c) *anticipation* 5

(d) *boiling* 2? 3? — depends on variety!

5. Breaking down spoken words

- How would you divide each of these words (one syllable) into **two parts**?
 - (a) *beep*
 - (b) *sport*
 - (c) *crash*

5. Breaking down spoken words

- How would you divide each of these words (one syllable) into **two parts**?
 - (a) *beep*
 - (b) *sport*
 - (c) *crash*
- English speakers tend to divide syllables between the initial consonant(s) (=onset) and the rest of the syllable (=rime)
- Speakers of other languages may have a different response pattern

5. Breaking down spoken words

- How many individual **speech sounds** (consonants and vowels) are there in each of these words?
 - (a) *she*
 - (b) *six*
 - (c) *using*

Don't be fooled by **spelling**—practice saying words out loud and **listening** to yourself

5. Breaking down spoken words

- How many individual **speech sounds** (consonants and vowels) are there in each of these words?

(a) *she* 2

(b) *six* 4

(c) *using* 5...but maybe not the ones you thought?

Don't be fooled by **spelling**—practice saying words out loud and **listening** to yourself

- Individual speech sound categories (such as /s/ or /i/) are known as **phonemes**

5. Breaking down spoken words

- These three tasks show aspects of **phonological awareness**
 - Syllable awareness
 - Onset/rime awareness
 - Phonemic (phoneme) awareness
- **Phonological awareness:** *conscious* awareness of aspects of the sound structure of spoken language
 - Reinforces, and is reinforced by, **phonics-based reading instruction**

6. For next class

- We will look more systematically at
 - the **speech sounds (phonemes)** of “standard” American English
 - the **IPA symbols** used to transcribe them
- The assigned preparation gives an overview of this material
 - In class, we will discuss and practice these concepts