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

  Remember to REFRESH your web browser
  to get the latest version of a web page

1. Phonics in reading education

- RE #1: How does the Reading Rockets web site define **phonics**?

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    - "instruction [that] teaches the **relationships** between the **letters** of **written language** and the **sounds** of **spoken language**" [my emphasis]

- What do you remember about learning phonics?

    - Please remind me what your name is ☺

    - Did you learn phonics in **school** or elsewhere?

    - Was it fun / boring / challenging / helpful / ...?

1. Phonics in reading education

- RE #1: What are some learning activities described in the "Sold a Story" podcast (E1) that are *not* phonics activities?

2. Human language vs. writing

- Let's take another look at that [Reading Rockets](#) definition of *phonics*:

  - "instruction [that] teaches the **relationships** between the **letters** of **written language** and the **sounds** of **spoken language**" [my emphasis]

- Before we get started talking about reading, we need to look more carefully at

  - what we mean by **language**
  - how language is related to **writing** / reading

2. Human language vs. writing

- What is **language**?

2. Human language vs. writing

- 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
  - Does every human society have language?
  - Does every human society have writing?

2. Human language vs. writing

- Written language is **not** the "essence" of language
  - **Human spoken (signed) language acquisition** is a largely **biological**, **developmental** process

  - **Reading and writing** are **cultural** developments

2. Human language vs. writing

- 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 language system

  - **Reading and writing** are **cultural** developments

2. Human language vs. writing

- Summary of some key differences between spoken and written language
  (list from Seidenberg 2017: 17–18)

Spoken language	Written language
• evolved in humans • universal • learned via interaction	• cultural, like money • only some people have it • explicitly taught
• fast fading • messy, disfluent	• 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?

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?
  → **Prescriptive** grammar

  - <u>Useful</u> for learning a foreign language, or learning a particular style (formal writing, …)
  - NOT the focus of most <u>research in linguistics</u>

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 <u>American</u> English (it "sounds wrong")

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

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

- So—
  Which is **<u>correct</u>**, American English or Australian English?

??? 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 <u>initial consonant(s)</u> (=*onset*) and the <u>rest of the syllable</u> (=*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