LINGUA INGLESE

PHONETICS

Phonetics is the study of the **sounds of speech**; it can be divided into 3 main branches:

1. **Articulary Phonetics**
   is the study of how the **organs of speech** produce sounds;

2. **Acoustic Phonetics**
   deals with the physical aspects of the perturbations of the ambient air caused by the articulary movement of the organs of speech;

3. **Perceptual Phonetics**
   Deals with how the sounds are perceived and processed in the air and the brain.

Organs of Speech
The organs of speech are the **organs of the oral cavity** (tongue, lips, teeth, velum), **pharynx and larynx**, which contribute to the articulation of the sounds of speech (also known as speech organs or vocal tract).

When we talk about phonetics the main topics are:

- **Consonants**
- **Vowels**
- **Semi vowels**

Consonants

Consonants are articulated so that the air stream is perturbed, and the turbulence or blockage is produced; they can be divided in:

- **Fricatives:** so called because the air becomes turbulent passing between the tongue and the top teeth, creating a high frequency noise;

- **Stop:** so called because their articulation involves a complete blockage of the vocal tract;

- **Nasals:** so called because their articulation involves the nasal cavity;

- **Affricates:** are quite complex sounds because they involve an alveolar stop but with a post alveolar release;

- **Sonorants:** which don't involve turbulence or blockage of the vocal tract.

Vowels

Vowels differ from consonants in that they don't involve any blockage of the airstream through the vocal tract, but rather alter its shape so that the cavities in the vocal tract resonate in different ways.
They can be articulated by:

- **Rounding or spreading the lips;**
- **Moving the tongue around the month;**
- **Opening or closing the velum to let the air out through the nose.**

Vowels can be classified:

- Depending on the tongue's position in the horizontal dimension in:
    - **Front**
    - **Central**
    - **Back**
- Depending on the tongue's position in the vertical dimension:
    - **High**
    - **Mid**
    - **Low**
- Then, the position of the lips offers a further classification into:
    - Rounded (with lips pursed)
    - Unrounded (with lips spread or neutral)

Vowels can then be divided in:

- Long vowels
- Short vowel

Diphthongs are made by creating different combinations of vowels.

Semi-Vowels

Semi-vowels articulate similarly to vowels, so there is no obstruction of the vocal tract, but they act like consonants since they come at syllable edges.

PHONOLOGY

Phonology is the branch of linguistics that deals with how speech sounds are organized in linguistic systems.
A **Phoneme** is the basic unit in a language phonological system, so basically phonemes are the units of the sound even though they're not sounds.
Phonemic distinctions are established by the principle of **Contrast among minimal pairs.**

> In other words, when two words differ by only one sound, those sounds are said to contrast because they create a distinction in meaning between the two words. Minimal pairs are pairs of words that differ only by one sound in the same position in each word.

Allophones are variant forms of a phoneme.
Phonemes can then be grouped together in classes called **Natural Classes** of sounds which are defined by natural feature.

We could say that English has a morpheme (-d) for the past tense, which has three variants (/d/, /t/ and /id/). These forms are allomorphs of the past tense -d, and the alternations is called **conditioned allomorphy.**

Making a generalization as we said for what concerns Phonetics:

- **Vowels**: only appear in the middle of a syllable (even though High Vowels can appear anywhere in a syllable);
- **Consonants**: only appear at the edges of a syllable;
- **Semi-Vowels**: when /i/ and /u/ appear at syllable edges we call them semi-vowels /j/ and /w/.

> Another thing to say is that **vowels are always voiced**: voiceless vowels are possible but they're very rare in the world's language; **consonants instead can be voiceless or voiced**.

Assimilation is a phonological process where nearby (usually adjacent) phonemes happen a phonetic modification in such a way that they become more similar.

MORPHOLOGY

Morphology is the branch of linguistics that studies the structure of words.
When we talk about morphology, the first most important feature to understand is the **Duality of Patterning,** so, meaningless phonemes combine together to make meaningful words and meaningful words combine to make an almost unlimited number of complex words.
In this case phonemes are distinguished from allophones in that they are phonological items that do this combining and recombining.

Let's explain one thing before: a **simple word** is a word formed by a single word; **complex words** are words made by the union of many words.

So we now move to the definition of **Morpheme**: a morpheme can be defined as the smallest meaningful unit of language.

Note that: a morpheme can be a word like “cat” but also can appear in words like “baker” formed by two morphemes: “bake” and which is called a Free Morpheme and “–(e)r” which is a Bound Morpheme.

Free Morpheme are stand-alone morphemes which can also be simple words; **Bound Morphemes** are morphemes that need to be attached to something else.
There are 3 ways to make complex words using morphemes:

- **Compounding** (there are two types in English)
- **Derivation**
- **Inflection**

Compounding

In the English language there are two kinds of compound:

- **Root Compounds**
  A root compound is a type of compound word where two or more root words are combined to create a new word with its own unique meaning. In a root compound, each root word contributes to the overall meaning of the compound. *(Word+Word)*.

- **Synthetic Compounds**
  A synthetic compound instead is a kind of compound where a word is combined with a complex word formed by a morpheme and a bound morpheme which is made with a Suffix that actually attaches to both words. *(Word+Word)+Suffix.*

Derivation

Derivation is the second way of making complex words: derivation involves adding suffixes, bound morphemes, to words, with the result that the category of the word changes (and so the meaning).

Ex: person (noun) → person(al) (quality) → person(alize) (verb)
→ person(alization) (noun).

Inflection

Inflections are bound morphemes which don’t change category, instead they specify something about the sintax or semantics of the word they attach to.

Ex: - (e)d is an inflectional morpheme that expresses past tense.

In English there are very few bound morphemes (the -s or -es in third person, -ing, -ed) and the use of them is strictly related to phonology, so morphology is regulated by phonological rules (so-called morphophonology).

SYNTAX

Syntax deals with the structure of phrases and sentences and allows to form any of an infinite number of sentences. Syntax is the core of the expressive power of language that gives people freedom of expression, the ability to talk about everything and anything.

Competence and Performance
A person's **competence** in their native language is their ability to control all the aspects of that language's structure. **Performance** is putting competence into action: actually speaking and understanding your language.

The linguist Noa Chomsky says that you may be the first person of all history to say a given sentence since as Steven Pinker asserts that the combinatorial possibilities of syntax are so great that a list would be hopelessly long; he estimates that there are 6.3 trillion possible combinations of words making up a simple 5-word sentence of English.

A sentence can be made by following **Syntactic Rules** and by respecting 3 basic building blocks of syntax:

- **Categories**
- **Constituent Structure**
- **Rules**

Categories

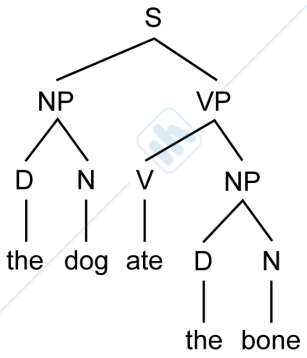
There are two types of **categories:**

- Lexical categories: are N, V, Adj, Adv and P and they for open classes, as to say, you can always add new members to them;
- Functional Categories include auxiliaries and articles and are closed classes, so you can't make up new ones.

Constituent Structure

The **Constituent Structure** is the core set of syntax, generated by Phrase-Structure Rules and represented by a **labeled bracketing or a tree diagram.**

All of these letters is a node:
S is the root node;
VP is a branching node because divides in two branches and so it's also a non-terminal node because it has branches below;
The actual words like "bone" or "dog" are terminal nodes because they don't have anything underneath



Now we need to talk about two central notions of constituent structure called **Dominance and Constituency.**

Dominance

In a tree diagram, a given category dominates another category if is higher up the tree than the other one (so S dominates all other nodes and VP the nodes below it).

Constituency

Constituency is the opposite: a category is a constituent of another one if it's below that category in the tree diagram. Also B is an Immediate Constituent of A if no node intervenes on the path from A to B.

Rules

The basic rules of combination in syntax are called **Phrase-Structure Rules** or PS-rules and tell us something about the relations between nodes.
The basic PS-rule of English is: S ⟶ NP VP
The property of PS-rules that makes it possible to generate infinite structures form a finite set of rules is called **Recursion**.

SEMANTICS

Semantics is the study of meaning, particularly **sentence meaning.**
Meanings are **conventional** and **arbitrary** that is to say the relation between a phonological shape of a word and what it means is arbitrary: this idea is known as the *arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign.*
Meaning is linked to **Reference** which explains the relation between a word and the thing (s) it names, as if the word labeled things, non-existing entities or abstract or abstract concepts and **Sense:** an intrinsic property of the word that gives it its power of referring to something.

Said so, sentence meaning depends on the words that make up the sentence and how they're put together: sentence meaning is compositional, so to know the meaning of a sentence is to know the conditions that would make the sentence true. This approach to semantics is known as **Truth-conditional semantics**.

Logic

Logic is the study of deductions, inferences and related matters and is strictly related to the meaning of a sentence.

Compositional Semantics

Compositional semantics is the approach to **sentence meaning**, which follows the principle that the meaning of a complex expression can be obtained by obtaining the meaning of its parts.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics which deals with how interlocutors manage to convey more than what is actually said."

First, we have to discern Locutionary Acts from Illocutionary Acts:

- A **Locutionary Act** is the act of making utterance expressing the literal meaning of a sentence;
- An **Illocutionary Act** is the intention behind the utterance which carries **Illocutionary Force** for example in the expression "Could u pass me the salt?" I'm not asking if you would be able to pass me the salt but I'm actually making a request.
- The **Perlocutionary Effects** are the result of the speech act.

Felicity Conditions are conditions that need to be executed of fulfilled in order to make a speech act work.

Implicatures

In pragmatics, an i**mplication** refers to an indirect meaning or suggestion that is conveyed by a speaker or writer without explicitly saying it. It involves the listener or reader knowing information or drawing conclusions based on contextual cues, background knowledge, or shared assumptions. (**Remember that there are scalar implications too**).
All of this respecting **Co-operative principles**.

HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS (how to find lost languages)

Historical linguistics is the study of how languages change over time, and it mainly deals with:

- **Correspondence among languages**
- **Systematic sound changes**
- **Reconstructing lost languages**

Correspondence

Correspondence refers to a systematic relationship between sounds or words in different languages that can be traced back to a common ancestral language. These correspondences arise due to regular sound changes that occur over time. By comparing and analyzing these correspondences across related languages, linguists can reconstruct and understand the phonetic and semantic changes that have taken place in the evolution of languages.

So we can say that:

Proto-Indo-European is the mother language as far as we know (except Basque, Finnish, Hungarian and Estonian) since we can't track back languages older than 5.000-8.000 years ago.

Proto West Germanic and Latin are examples of daughters of this language.

Proto West Germanic gave birth to Frisian, English, Dutch and German.

Latin gave birth to Romance languages that is to say Romanian, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.

All of these languages share common features and show the evolution of language from the mother one.

Systematic sound changes and Comparative Reconstruction

Which is the technique used in historical linguistics for recovering what we can of the languages of the past for which we don't have record, or incomplete records and see how they looked like.
These reconstructed languages are known as **Protolanguages.**
This is why we talk about Proto West Germanic and Proto Indo-European; we could call Latin Latin Proto Romance, but we don't because we didn't have to reconstruct it.
While we can reconstruct phonetics and phonology, but also inflectional morphology or verbal morphology we can't reconstruct syntax, even though we can observe recurrent syntactic patterns

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Sociolinguistics is where linguistics meets sociology. Sociolinguistics deals with how language varies from region to region and from social group to social group but today a very important topic is language and gender and how men and women speak differently.

Talking about England, there are two main differences in the vowel system between Northern England and Southern England. First, Northern accents don't have /ʌ/ vowel. In this varieties *put* and *putt* or *buck* and *book* are all pronounced with the same vowel /ʊ/.
The second difference has to do with the vowel, mostly spelled <a> in words like *grass* or *dance*. In the South this is /ɑ:/, the same vowel as in *father* and *car.* In the North, the vowel is shorth /æ/, although usually pronounced somewhat lower than /æ/ and more like an IPA [a].
Therefore we can use **Isoglosses**: a line we can draw on a map separate these variants.

In general we can divide all of the accents of English into three main groups:

- One group of accents is basically Scots, extending across Ulster, which have very long vowels and diphthongs;
- In the second group, we have almost of the English accents like for example Wales, New England or New York which have in common the fact that they fail to pronounce < r > in words like *car*, pronounced only at the beginning of a syllable as in *red* or *Fred*;
- The third set of accents pronounces these < r >s, basically all American varieties except for example New England and New York and Canada.

In Britain though, Received Pronunciation (RP), refers to a particular variety of English which lacks regional connotations as we can see in the "conservative" part of Southern British English. RP English is almost vanished, but it's called "The Queen's English", "BBC English" or "Oxford English".
Most middle-class people in Britain nowadays speak a regionalized approximation to an innovative form of RP while working-class people tend to use more regionally diverse forms of English, we can say there is an approximate correlation between social class and the spoken variety.
As Labov recognized these varieties have **social value,** so they can be recognized as markers of speech of a particular social class in a study made in 1962 in New York stores, studying the incidence of rhoticity, marking a correlation between accent and social class.
The results of this study showed awareness of **Overt Prestige**, the desire to sound classy and to the speech of the dominant group in society, related to the phenomenon of **Hypercorrection,** which is the overuse of the prestige form.
Another observation was the concept of **Covert Prestige** which arises when people want to distinguish themselves from the "dominant group" using low-prestige forms in order to show a distinct social or regional identity.

A similar study was made by Trudgill in the early 1970s in Norwich but with the pronunciation of the ending -ing that usually becomes -in' and the results were also similar.

Another very important thing to underline is that many languages express negation in the way French does, and we call this **Negative Concord:** it consists in expressing negation by negating several bits of the sentence at once. In Standard English, for example, two negatives make the sentence positive.
This can also be seen in the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) called "Ebonics" which also has negative concord as expressed in one of Labov's 1972 works.

LANGUAGE TYPOLOGY AND UNIVERSALS (How to build a language)

The pioneer of **Language Typology** was Joseph Greenberg.
Greenberg looked at thirty languages around the world and observed about forty-five universals of different types; one of the things he observed was the basic order of the main elements in a single sentence: subject (S), verb (V) and object (O).
So we talk about SVO languages like English mainly opposed to SOV languages like Japanese.

- SOV is the most famous
- SVO is the second most famous
- VSO
- VOS
- OVS
- OSV

This is due to history, psycholinguistic, so maybe SOV and SVO are the most spoken because they're the easiest to use and understand but another reason is that Universal Grammar, while allowing all of the orders prefers SOV and SVO, perhaps the PS-rules that generate these orders are somehow more natural than the others.
Most SVO languages are like French, and most SOV ones are like Japanese.

PSYCHOLINGUISTICS (How to Lose a Language and how to Learn a New Language)

Psycholinguistics is where linguistics and psychology meet; it deals with language learning and acquisition, language disorders (what happens to someone's language when they get certain kinds of brain damage), and how we "process" language in real time as we hear it.

Language Disorders (or language pathology) is the study of what happens to a person's language if they suffer brain damage of some kind.
Aphasia, is a generical term for a range of syndromes involving language impairment as a consequence of brain damage; it has been known since the nineteenth century that there are two main kinds of Aphasia:

- Broca's Aphasia
- Wernicke's Aphasia

Broca's Aphasia

Broca's Aphasia concerns a damage of the Broca's Area, a particular part of the left hemisphere of the brain; this kind of Aphasia also known as **expressive aphasia** or **agrammatic aphasia,** typically halts speech. Individuals with Broca's aphasia often have difficulty forming words and outputting speech and may experience problems with fluency, including slow and labored speech. Despite understanding language and having intact comprehension abilities, individuals with Broca's aphasia struggle to properly express themselves verbally.

Wernicke's Aphasia

Wernicke's Aphasia, also known as **receptive aphasia,** concerns damage of Wernicke's Area, a particular part of the brain a little behind and above the left ear; these individuals experience difficulty understanding and producing meaningful language. They may have fluent speech, with normal rate, rhythm, and intonation, but it is often nonsensical and lacks coherence. They may use incorrect words or invent new words (neologisms) without realizing their errors. Sentences may appear grammatically correct, but the overall meaning is lost. Comprehension is severely impaired, and individuals with Wernicke's aphasia struggle to understand spoken and written language.

How children acquire a new language

Generally linguists tend to talk about acquiring a new language instead of learning when we talk about children since learning generally implies being taught.
First, we have to make a distinction between **Internal Language** (I-Language) and **External Language** (E- language).
I-Language is something seen internal to the individual: a property of mind and brain;

E-Language is something seen as external to the individual minds and brains but more a property of societies and cultures. So arguably IL is smore important than EL since logically, you can't have any EL unless someone's got and IL in their head.
Another important distinctions that has to be made is between linguistic **competence** and **performance**; competence is closely identified with IL: performance it's not EL though: EL is by definition a non-psychological notion.

- **Children a day or two old**: can distinguish their mother tongue from other languages; they're particularly sensitive to rhythm and intonation.
- **At about 6 to 8 months**: babbling starts; children start to control their organs of speech; babbling means saying words that follow a general pattern Consonant-Vowel.
- **At around 8 to 10 months**: babbling starts to become recognizable sounds of the mother tongue.
- **At around 10 to 12 months**: the first word or two come out and so we can say that children acquire duality of Patterning.
- **At around 18 months**: the two-word stage starts.

Actually, children understand longer sentences at this stage, indicating that their competence outstrips their performance due to limitations such as memory, shorth attention span and limited vocabulary.

- **From 24 to 30 months:** we can see longer utterances but still no words belonging to functional categories.

There is no recognizable three- or four-word stage.

- **At around 30 months:** what happens is a kind of grammatical explosion with adult like sentences.

The acquisition of past-tense instead, follows a U shaped curve in that at first produce both regular and irregular inflections, then they go through a phase of overgeneralization and finally they achieve to distinguish irregulars from regulars.

- **At around 3 to 5 years old**: children learn on average ten new words a day.

So, where does all that knowledge come from?
Philosophers like Locke and Hume argued that the mind could be a blank sheet on which experience writes: according to them knowledge comes either experience or from "association of ideas" but can also be a matter of logical deduction; children are linguistic autodidacts, of course they need to hear a language in their environment, and which language they hear will determine which language they're going to speak but Chomsky argued that this couldn't be all: IL is too complex for 5 year children so something must be there at the start: he refers to linguistic innate ideas but it could be human genome, that 2% that distinguishes human from chimps