



**THE PECULIARITIES OF LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION:
COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE**

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Annotation: The article presents important facts about effective way of human communication and its components. Furthermore, special modes of language were noted.

Key words: *linguistic signs, articulatory organs, word-realizations, linguistic communication, Externalised Language, Internalised Language, Generative Linguistics.*

Human beings communicate in lots of ways, but the most effective way of human communication is linguistic communication, i.e. the use of language. The basic signs used in linguistic communication are words.² Words (and morphemes) are predominantly symbolic signs, though a small subset of them (onomatopoeia) are partly iconic. The linguistic signs and the rules for their combinations used by a community constitute a linguistic code (a language). Linguistic communication takes place in the following way. Speaker A, in his/her mind, selects words from the language and combines them according to the rules of the language, i.e. encodes the message. Then his/her articulatory organs – or, in the case of writing, his/her hands – realise the signs: transmit the string of words into a physical signal, a stretch of sound or writing. This signal is perceived by the ears – or, in the case of writing, by the eyes – of Speaker B, who then decodes the message, i.e. reconstructs the message in his/her mind.

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Linguistic communication, i.e. the use of language, is characteristically vocal and verbal behaviour, involving the use of discrete language elements. • It is vocal because it is crucially associated with the articulatory (vocal) organs. • It is verbal because words play a central part in it. • Thirdly, it involves the use of discrete language elements, which differ from one another discretely (on an either-or basis) rather than gradually (on a more-or-less basis)[1]. Words as lexical items are discrete because they differ from one another on an either-or basis. This means that two word-realizations either represent the same word or two different words. For instance, whenever English speakers utter the word pen, there will always be some physical difference between the realizations, but these variations are not only gradual and hardly noticeable but also insignificant, and so each rendering will be taken as realising the same word pen. However, when the English words pen, pan, car, picture and camera are uttered, the words are discretely different, regardless of the fact that in physical terms pen and pan, both starting with /p/ and ending with /n/ are more similar to each other than to the others. In the relevant sense, they are all discretely different because if you change one of them for another in a particular sentence you may get a completely different sentence, with a completely different meaning.

As we noted above, a language is a linguistic code, which its speakers know and use, and which manifests itself in its speakers' linguistic knowledge and in the actual utterances that its speakers make in linguistic communication. Consequently, language can be regarded as existing in essentially two modes. On the one hand it can be looked upon as a body of objective facts (strings of sounds or letters) produced and perceived by its users in linguistic communication. On the other hand it can be regarded as the language users' knowledge which makes linguistic communication possible, an internal property of the human mind. One of the greatest figures in modern linguistics, Noam Chomsky, has called these two





modes of language Externalised Language (E-language) and Internalised Language (I-language), respectively[2].

The dominant kind of language study in the first half of the 20th century, viz. Structuralist Linguistics (see Unit 3), concentrated on E-language. It aimed at collecting samples of E-language, i.e. samples of the actual products of linguistic communication, as objects independent of the mind, and then describing the regularities (patterns, structures) found in those samples. Since then, however, the interest and emphasis of language study has shifted to I language, i.e. to the knowledge that native speakers of a language possess and use when they communicate linguistically. Generative Linguistics aims at modelling the I-language of the native speaker, i.e. his/her linguistic knowledge or internal grammar.

A natural language (whether we look upon it as E-language or I-language) has several components. The central ones are phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

- Phonology includes the phonemes (basic sounds) and the discrete suprasegmental elements (stress patterns, tones, intonation) in the language. The phonological component also contains rules that regulate how phonemes can be combined in morphemes and words. For example, the sequences /kQt/ 20 and /tQk/ are phonologically well-formed in English, but */ktQ/ or */tkQ/ are phonologically ill-formed.

- Another component is morphology. This includes the morphemes and the rules for combining them to derive and inflect words in a particular language. (For the time being we define morphemes as the smallest meaningful units of a language[3]. We will make this definition more precise in Unit 5.) In English, for instance, the morpheme -ion can be added to the verb elect (which is a vocabulary item) and the result is the noun election (which is a new vocabulary item derived





from the former one). In a similar way, the plural morpheme -s can be added to the noun election to obtain the plural form of the same noun: elections (which is not a new vocabulary item but the inflected variant of an already existing one). The morphological rules of English tell us that the sequence un-friend-li-ness is a morphologically well-formed word, while **friend-li-un-ness* is not.

- Syntax is the component of language that contains the rules for putting together words in phrases and phrases in sentences. For example, the English sentence He went to London. is syntactically well-formed, whereas *To he London went. is syntactically ill-formed.

- Finally, languages also contain a system of meanings: this component is known as semantics. The semantic rules specify which sentences are semantically normal and which are semantically anomalous. For instance, This woman is the mother of three girls. is semantically normal but ! This woman is the father of three oil-wells. is anomalous. In addition, we can also separate a special component in which all the central components may play a role, viz. a lexicon. This is a list of the vocabulary items of a language and it contains all idiosyncratic information about those vocabulary items (such as the unpredictable aspects of their phonology, morphology, syntactic behaviour, and meaning).

Summing up all given facts above, it should be noted that words, once formed and established as vocabulary items, are stored in the lexicon, from where they can be retrieved as wholes and do not have to be put together again from their constituent morphemes every time they are used by a speaker[4]. Native speakers of a language have linguistic knowledge: they know their language. They possess I-language, they have an internal grammar. They know the elements and the rules in the various components of their language, after all they use those elements and obey those rules all the time and, on the basis of this knowledge, they can tell whether a string of words in their language is grammatical or not. But most speakers are unable to explain to their children or to their foreign friends why one





string of words is grammatical in their language and another is not. This is because their linguistic knowledge (internal grammar) is intuitive (subconscious), and they cannot express it explicitly (i.e. clearly and definitely).

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