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EXFAC03-AAS v11 Language

❑ 1: Language universals

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Introduction: The lecturer

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peper, piper, ቁንዶ ብርብሪ, kundo berbere, فلفل, filfil, istihoti, պղպեղ, bghbegh, jaluk, бибәр, biber, piperra, перац, perats, golmarich, p'ilp'il, pebr, пипер, pipar, nayukon, pɛpɛ, pebre, 胡椒, hú-jiāo, pwav, papar, pepř, peber, peper, ẹkhịẹn, pepper, pipor, pipro, pipar, pippuri, poivre, shitor, pementa, kamulali, პილპილი, pilpili, pfeffer, pheffur, pheffar, πιπέρι, pipéri, mari, pipa, màsóoróo, pepa, פלפל, pilpel, मिर्च, mirch, kua txob, hwj txob, bors, ose, merica, lada, pilipili, piobar, pepe, 胡椒, koshoo, mrica, ಮೆಣಸು, menasu, mòsóró, Бұрыш, burıṣ, bogij, mrech, nduru, ndũrũ, пӗрэц , pierec, муруч, muruch, 후추, huchu, phik noi, pipari, pipirai, бибер, biber, dipoàvatra, lada, mulagu, bżar, kutuŋ, повааръ, povaair, pepee, pherefere, gola maricha, hudʒau, nthänts'i, (kali) marich, فلفل, philphili, pieprz, pimenta, pebre, peure, kaxlan q'een, pepšo, перец, perets, marica, pёрё, бибер, biber, dipwav, miris, peprovník, poper, pjepjeŕ, pepere, pimienta, pepre, pilipili, peppar, paminta, மிளகு, milagu, řfəřfəř, savyamu, พริกไทย, phrík thai, fowarilbu, pepa, viriviri, perehere, meko, pimenta, перець, perets, کالی مرچ, mirch, eribo, phiriphiri, hạt tiêu, pupur, ponhontaj, ipepile, bieres, pimientam, פעפער, fefer, ata, uphepha,

Introduction:
The lectures

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- ❑ Amharic (amh) ➔ ቁንዶ ብርብሪ (kundo berbere)
- ❑ Arabic (ara) ➔ فلفل (filfil)
- ❑ Hebrew (heb) ➔ פלפל (pilpel)
- ❑ Hindi (hin) ➔ मिर्च (mirch)
- ❑ Japanese (jpn) ➔ 胡椒 (koshoo) こしょう
- ❑ Chinese (zho) ➔ 胡椒 (hú-jiāo)
- ❑ Persian (fas) ➔ فلفل (philphili)
- ❑ Sanskrit (san) ➔ मरिचं (marica)
- ❑ Turkish (tur) ➔ biber

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Course contents

1. Universals
2. Typology
3. Language families
4. Language contact
5. Language variation
6. Summary

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Language universals

- Topics
  - Kinds of universals
  - Explanations for universals
  - Lexicon and grammar
  - From meaning to form
  - Arbitrariness
  - Double articulation
  - Lexical universals
  - Basic colour terms
  - Universal word classes
  - Universals of speech sounds

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Comparing three languages

- Japanese

shiyoonin	ga	uma	ni	mizu	wo	ageta
servant	NOM	horse	DAT	water	ACC	gave

- Arabic

´actʸā	l-khādimu	l-ħisʸāna	mā´an
gave	the-servant-NOM	the-horse-ACC	water-ACC

- Fula

suka	hokkii	puccu	ndiyam
servant	gave	horse	water

IPA: http://www.yorku.ca/earmstro/ipa/

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Differences

- Three obvious differences
  - Pronunciation
  - Word order
  - Case marking
- Two less obvious differences
  - Meanings (e.g. 'servant')
  - Arabic sentence non-idiomatic (cf. ʼarwā or rawwā)

- Japanese

shiyooni	ga	uma	ni	mizu	wo	ageta
servant	NOM	horse	DAT	water	ACC	gave

- Arabic

ʼactˤā	l-khādimu	l-ħisˤāna	māʼan
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suka	hokkii	puccu	ndiyam
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Similarities

- Meaningful units
  - Sentences consisting of words
- Form and meaning
  - Each word has a fixed pronunciation and semantic content
- Sound units
  - Pronunciation can be analyzed as syllables made up of vowels and consonants
- Meaning components
  - Sentence expresses an event consisting of an "action" (giving) and three participants
- Word classes
  - Action referred to with a verb, the participants with nouns
- Syntactic functions
  - Participants perform different grammatical functions (subject, direct object, indirect object)

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Three kinds of universals

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- Absolute universals
  - Properties found in all languages
    - "All languages have vowels and consonants"
- Statistical universals
  - Properties found in most languages, but not all
    - "Subjects tend strongly to precede objects"
- Implicational universals
  - Property A implies property B (but not necessarily vice-versa)
    - "If a language has voiced fricatives, it also has unvoiced fricatives, but not necessarily the other way round"

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Explanations for universals

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- Monogenesis (lit. "single birth")
  - "All languages derive from the same proto-language"
- Language contact
  - Languages constantly influence each other
- Innateness
  - "Language structure is genetically determined"
- Function
  - Ease of use (fitness for purpose) based on cognitive, anatomic or other considerations

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Lexicon and grammar

- All languages make use of two basic components
- Lexicon
  - Mental dictionary containing all lexical items (e.g. words and fixed expressions)
    - horse, run, beautiful, kick the bucket, …

/sli:p/
'to take repose by the natural suspension of consciousness'

- Grammar
  - Rules or patterns for combining lexical items

Peter will come! **Subject AUX Verb**
STATEMENT: That X will do Y

Will Peter come? **AUX Subject Verb**
QUESTION: Whether X will do Y

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Differences between lexicon and grammar

	Objects	Form	Complexity
LEXICON	individual items	strings of sounds	whole
GRAMMAR	general rules	structural patterns	combination

- The distinction is not absolute
  - What is a rule?
    - (is will a lexical item or a grammatical marker?)
  - Grammatical meaning not only expressed through structure
    - (also affixes and function words, e.g. plural -s, perfect marker have)
  - Lexicon contains many complex items in which grammatical structure enters into the lexicon
    - children, kindness, milk-shake, kick the bucket

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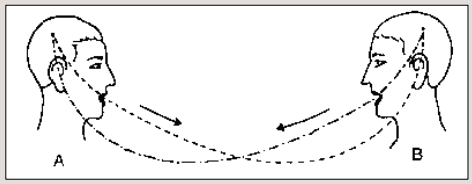
From meaning to form

- Language is a medium of communication
- Ideas (meaning) are transmitted using speech sounds (form)
- Saussure (the "father of modern linguistics") used the diagram on the right in his famous *Cours de linguistique generale* (1916)



Person A produces speech sounds – form – to transmit ideas – meaning – from his mind to the mind of person B.

Person B more or less successfully reconstructs the ideas of person A in his own mind on the basis of the sound waves that his ears pick up.

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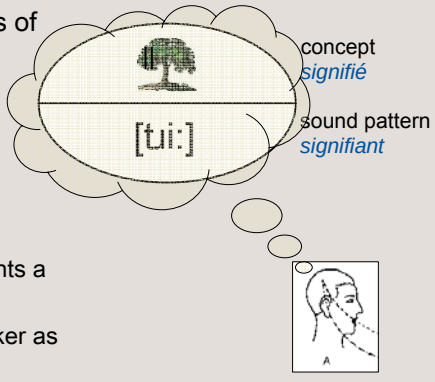
From meaning to form

- All languages consist of pairings of form and meaning
  - Saussure's linguistic sign
    - sound pattern (signifiant) and concept (signifié)
- The meaning of a lexical item is different from its reference
  - The English word 'tree' represents a mental concept
  - It exists in the mind of the speaker as a psychological entity
  - The actual trees found in the physical world all belong to the reference of the word 'tree', not to its meaning



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Form as both physical and psychological entity

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- The same distinction applies to form
  - phonetic form is concrete and physical (sound waves)
  - psychological form varies from language to language
- An example from English and Korean
  - **English** [p^h] and [p] are perceived as the same sound even though they are phonetically distinct
    - cf. pill [$p^hɪl$] and spill [spɪl]
  - **Korean** [p^h] and [p] are perceived as different sounds
    - cf. 팔 [p^hal] 'arm' and 발 [pal] 'leg'
- The physical sounds (phones) [p^h] and [p] are two distinct phonemes in Korean, and a single phoneme in English

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The components of language

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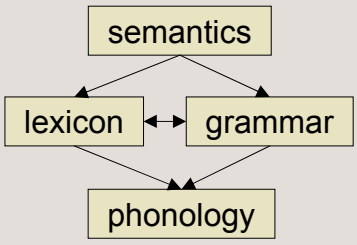
- **Also the main components of the study of language – linguistics**
  - semantics – meaning
  - phonology – form
  - lexicon and grammar are "intermediaries"
- **Grammar** usually divided into two parts
  - syntax
  - morphology



- **Syntax**
  - studies how words are combined
- **Morphology**
  - the internal structure of words

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The relationship between form and meaning

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- In general the relationship is arbitrary
- But it can also be motivated or iconic
- Arbitrariness in lexical items
  - 'tree' = arbre FRA mti SWA ju JAP tlugvi CHR
  - /ni:/ = nine NOR DAT JAP I HAU you (sg) ZHO
- Motivation in grammatical structures
  - milk + shake = milk shake
  - hen + -s = hens
- Iconicity
  - Involves some kind of resemblance between form and meaning

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Temporal iconicity

- I came, I saw, I conquered – (LAT: Veni, vidi, vici)
  - Order of clauses reflects order of events
- Principle extends to other grammatical structures
  - Given information tends to precede new information
  - If-clause tends to precede then-clause in conditionals
  - Clauses expressing cause tend to precede clauses expressing effect
- Such principles are not absolute, but strong universal tendencies

Non-arbitrary lexical items (1 & 2)

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- Arbitrary sound-meaning correspondence (lexical items)
  - Four exceptions to this general rule

1. Interjections

- Between body language and spoken language
- tut [!] (alveolar click)
  - one or twice: disapproval
  - many times: wonder, positive amazement
- hmm, hmph, hng
  - afterthought, question, …
- English hey, Chinese ei, wei
  - get attention, greeting

2. Onomatopoeia

- Sound-imitating words
- Imitate either the actual sound
  - bang, swish, ...
- Or the source of the sound
  - cuckoo, ping-pong, murmur, ...
- Form usually conforms to the sound pattern of the language
  - cf. oink ENG, nöff SWE, soch CYM, kkool-kkool KOR, khryu-khryu RUS, ut-it VIE

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Non-arbitrary lexical items (3 & 4)

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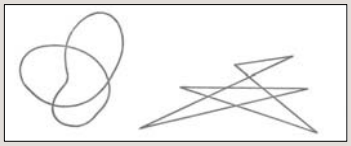
3. Parental terms

- Suprisingly similar across the world
  - Consonants with full oral closure (stops and nasals) – [p], [d], [m], [n], etc.
  - Consonants articulated in the front part of the oral cavity (labials and dentals) – not [k], [g]
  - Syllables with a single consonant followed by a single vowel – [ma], [pa], etc.
  - Open vowels – [a] rather than [i]
  - Often reduplicated – [mama], [papa], etc.

4. Sound symbolism

- Habitual association between certain sounds and meanings
  - usually language-dependent
- takete and maluma



- mikata and teki
  - one means 'friend', the other 'enemy'
  - which is which?

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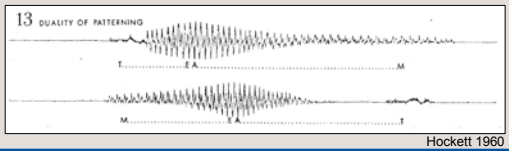
Double articulation



Hockett 1960

- Also known as duality of patterning (Hockett 1960)
  - Meaningful lexical items (words, etc.) are built from meaningless sounds (phonemes)
  - [k], [æ], [t] ➔ [kæt], [tæk], [ækt] ('cat', 'tack', 'act')
- Languages typically have
  - 10,000s of lexical items (morphemes, words, idiomatic expressions)
  - But only between 10 and 100 phonemes
- Its universality is not accidental
  - Without it, each lexical item (meaning) would have to be expressed by a unique sound
  - Would limit the lexicon to at most a few hundred items
- Humboldt: Language is the "infinite use of finite means"
  - Double articulation an important aspect of this
- Sometimes applied to other "building block" constructs in language…

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Duality of patterning in human language

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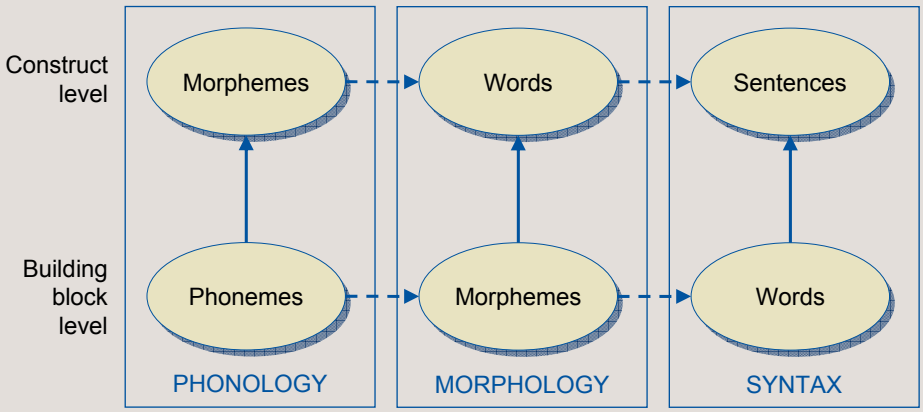

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Lexicalization

- If lexical items represent concepts, do languages lexicalize concepts in the same way?
- Certainly not all concepts
  - There are many ways to carve up semantic space
- Eight ZHO words for 'cousin'
  - differentiates according to (1) gender, (2) relative age, (3) paternal vs. maternal
    - English has not lexicalized e.g. '**elder male paternal cousin**'
    - Chinese has not lexicalized '**cousin**'
- There are probably no precise lexical universals
  - approximate only
  - statistical rather than absolute
- Examples:
  - 'water'
    - JAP **mizu** = 'cold water'
    - YEE **arm** = 'liquid'
  - 'mother'
    - KDD **ngunytju** = (polysemous)

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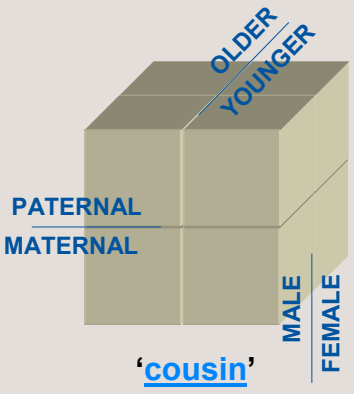
'Cousin' in Chinese

- tánggē 'elder male paternal cousin'
- tángdì 'younger male paternal cousin'
- tángjiě 'elder female paternal cousin'
- tángmèi 'younger female paternal cousin'
- biǎogē 'elder male maternal cousin'
- biǎodì 'younger male maternal cousin'
- biǎojiě 'elder female maternal cousin'
- biǎomèi 'younger female maternal cousin'



black ● white ● red ● green ● yellow ● blue ● brown ● purple ● pink ● orange ● grey

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Basic colour terms

- Colour terms of great interest
  - Colours are a continuum
  - Can be defined quite precisely
  - Directly perceived through one of the basic senses
- Languages vary greatly
  - ENG: 11 basic terms (see above)
  - LAT: lacked brown and grey
  - NAV: blue == green; 2x black
  - RUS: dark / light blue = синий [sinij] / голубой [goluboj]
  - JPN: 青 [ao] = green, blue or pale
  - HNN: 4 (black, white, red, green)
  - Some PNG languages: 2: e.g. muli (black/dark), mola (white/bright)
- Berlin & Kay discovered a pattern
  - Two terms = black and white
  - Three terms = black, white and red
  - etc.

Stage	# of terms	Colours
I	2	
II	3	
III	4	OR
IV	5	
V	6	
VI	7	
VII	10	

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Berlin & Kay (1969)

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WHITE BLACK 9 languages:	Stage I 7 New Guinea 1 Congo 1 South India
WHITE BLACK RED 21 languages:	Stage II 2 Amerindian 16 African 1 Pacific 1 Australian Aboriginal 1 South India
WHITE BLACK RED GREEN 8 languages:	Stage IIIa 6 African 1 Philippine 1 New Guinea
WHITE BLACK RED YELLOW 9 languages:	Stage IIIb 2 Australian Aboriginal 1 Philippine 3 Polynesian 1 Greek (Homeric) 2 African
WHITE BLACK RED GREEN YELLOW 18 languages:	Stage IV 12 Amerindian 1 Sumatra 4 African 1 Eskimo
WHITE BLACK RED GREEN YELLOW BLUE 8 languages:	Stage V 5 African 1 Chinese 1 Philippine 1 South India
WHITE BLACK RED GREEN YELLOW BLUE BROWN 5 languages:	Stage VI 2 African 1 Sumatra 1 South India 1 Amerindian
"COMPLETE" ARRAY OF COLOURS 20 languages:	Stage VII 1 Arabic 2 Malayan 6 European 1 Chinese 1 Indian 2 African 1 Hebrew 1 Japanese 1 Korean 2 South East Asian 1 Amerindian 1 Philippine

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Word class universals

- Concepts are given different grammatical expression in different languages
- Words are classified into word classes (parts of speech)
  - based on a mixture of semantic and grammatical criteria
  - different languages have different word classes
  - some word classes more or less universal
    - interjections, nouns, verb
- Interjections
  - The most unequivocably universal word class
  - Often contain untypical sounds (and sound combinations)
    - psst, mhm
- Four subtypes
  1. expressive (ouch, oh, wow, aha)
  2. directive (hush, psst, hey)
  3. phatic (mhm, yes, no, huh)
  4. descriptive ideophones (wham, thud, bang)

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Nouns and verbs (1)

- A universal distinction (?)
  - Prototypical noun refers to a concrete entity (substance or object)
    - mass noun or count noun
  - Prototypical verb refers to a (stative or dynamic) process
- But word classes are flexible:
  - ENG love not a concrete substance
  - ENG year not a concrete object
- Concepts are grammaticalized differently
  - Functions performed by ENG prep performed by ZHO verb
    - 'cut with a knife' ➔ using [a] knife [to] cut
  - SMO verbs include numerals
    - 'two men' ➔ man being-two
  - ENG 'agree' (verb) ➔ NOR enig (adj)*
  - ENG 'hungry' (adj) ➔ FRA avoir faim (vb + noun)

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Nouns and verbs (2)

- Syntactic consequences
  - Events typically expressed by verbs, participants by typically expressed by nouns (NPs)
- Morphological consequences
  - Inflected for different categories:
    - **ENG** nouns: number; verbs: complex TAM, person, number
    - **JPN** nouns: uninflected; verbs: complex TAM, politeness
    - **ZHO** nouns and verbs: uninflected but distinguished syntactically
- Distinction not always clear-cut
  - giving (participle) is a verb with noun-like features
  - belief (derived nominal) is a noun with verb-like features
- Reports of languages that lack the noun-verb distinction
  - e.g. American Indian:
    - no nouns meaning 'X', only verbs meaning 'to be X'
  - possibly due to incomplete understanding of the language
  - in any case, a very marginal phenomenon

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Adjectives

- Not a universal category
  - ZHO, most S-E Asian languages
    - no distinction between verbs and adjectives
  - I-E languages
    - adjectives a large, open class with noun-like properties
  - JPN has two types
    - i-adjectives (verb-like)
    - na-adjectives (noun-like)
  - Many African languages
    - adjectives either non-existent (verbs used instead), or a very minor, closed word class
- Adjectives have two basic functions
  1. to denote properties
  2. to denote states
- I-E languages emphasize property aspect
  - adjectives closer to nouns
  - stative aspect achieved using the copula (to be)
    - the man is tall
- ZHO and S-E Asian langs. emphasize state aspect
  - adjectives closer to verbs

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Universals of speech sounds – vowels

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The World Atlas of Language Structures Online

- Average inventory size 5-6
  - From 3 up to 46 or more (but WALS has from 2 to 14)
  - 3-vowel systems (e.g. Moroccan Arabic) "always" have /i/, /u/, /a/ (maximally different acoustically)
    - Hypothetical 3-vowel system with /i/, /y/, /e/ would be uneconomical and unduly burdensome
  - Common 5-vowel system (e.g. Swahili, Spanish, Japanese)

	Front	Back
Close	/i/	/u/
Open	/a/	

Typical 3-vowel system

- Universals
  1) All languages make a distinction between close and open vowels
  2) All languages make a distinction between front and back vowels
  3) The number of distinctions tends to be higher in the more close vowels than in the more open vowels
     - ➔ This applies to both front vs. back and to rounded vs. unrounded

	Front	Back
Close	/i/	/u/
Mid	/e/	/o/
Open	/a/	

Typical 5-vowel system

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Universals of speech sounds – consonants

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The World Atlas of Language Structures Online

- Average inventory size 23
  - Rotokas (West Bougainville; Papua New Guinea) has just 6: /p, t, k, b, d, g/
  - !Xóõ (Taa; Southern Khoisan; Botswana) has 122 [WALS…]
- Universals can be described in terms of place of articulation and manner of articulation:

1) All languages distinguish between labial and lingual consonants
   - i.e. lower lip (e.g. /b/, /m/, /f/) or tongue (/d/, /n/, /ç/, /k/)
2) Most languages distinguish between coronal and dorsal consonants
   - i.e. tip/blade (/d/, /ɳ/, /s/, /ʒ/) or mid-back (/j/, /ɲ/, /g/, /x/)
3) All languages distinguish between obstruents and sonorants
   - i.e. obstructed (i.e. stops /p/, /d/, /g/ and fricatives /f/, /z/, /ç/, /x/) or unobstructed (i.e. oral /w/, /j/ and nasal /m/, /n/)

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Universals of speech sounds – phonotactics

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The World Atlas of Language Structures Online

- Vowels and consonants are combined into syllables
- Phonotactic rules vary widely
  - CV only: Hawaiian, Mba
  - (C)V only: Fijian, Igbo, Yareba
  - No C clusters: Swahili, Turkish, Japanese, Chinese, Maori)
  - Maximum two Cs: Thai
  - Three or more Cs (rare): English (C)(C)(C)V(C)(C)(C)(C)
    - /stɪɛŋkθs/ strengths
  - Close to unique:
    - NOR skjelmskt
      KAT /gvbrdɣvnis/
- Universals
  1) All languages have syllables ending in a vowel (open syllables), but not all languages have syllables ending in a consonant (closed syllables) [xVC ⇒ xV]
  2) All languages have syllables with an initial consonant, but not all languages have syllables without an initial consonant [Vx ⇒ CVx]
  3) All languages that allow VC, also allow CVC and V, as well as the universal CV.
- Thus Turkish ev 'house' implies CV, V, CVC as well as VC

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Next week: Linguistic typology

- Further reading on universals
  - Comrie, Bernard. 1989. *Language universals and linguistic typology* (second edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
  - Greenberg, Joseph H. 1963. *Universals of language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
  - Hockett, Charles F. 1960. The origin of speech. *Scientific American*, *203*, 88–111.
  - Song, Jae Jung. 2001. *Linguistic typology: morphology and syntax*. Harlow: Longman.
  - Whaley, Lindsay J. 1997. *Introduction to typology: the unity and diversity of language*. London: Sage.

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Glossar (1)

adjective	adjektiv
alveolar	alveolar
alveoli [L]	gom
aspect	aspekt
auxiliary	hjelpeverb
back	bakre
case marking	markering av kasus
close	trang
cognitive	kognitiv
concept	begrep
consonant	konsonant
dens (pl. dente) [L]	tann
dental	dental
direct object	direkte object
double articulation	dobbel artikulasjon
event	hendelse
form	form
fricative	frikativ
front	fremre
gender	kjønn, genus
grammar	grammatikk
indirect object	indirekte object
innate	medfødt
interjection	interjeksjon
labial	labial
labium [L]	leppe
lexicalization	leksikalisering
lexicon	leksikon
lingua [L]	tunge
lingual	lingual
meaning	betydning
mid	midtre
monogenesis	monogenese
mood	modus
morpheme	morfem
morphology	morfologi
nasal	nasal, nasallyd
noun	substantiv
object	objekt
obstruent	obstruent

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Glossar (2)

onomatopoeia	onomapoetikon
open	åpen
oral	munn-, oral
part of speech (➔ word class)	
participant	deltaker
participle	partisipp
phone	fon
phoneme	fonem
phonetic	fonetisk
phonologisk	fonologisk
phonology	fonologi
phonotactic	fonotaktisk
phonotax	fonotax
pronunciation	uttale
property	egenskap
proto-language	protospråk
reference	referanse
rounded	rundet
semantic content	semantisk innhold
semantics	semantikk
sentence	setning
sign	tegn
sonorant	sonorant
state	tilstand
statement	utsagn
stop	lukkelyd, plosiv
subject	subjekt
syllable	stavelse
syntax	syntaks
TAM (➔ tense, aspect, modality)	
tense	tempus
universal	universale, universalt språktrekk
unrounded	urundet
unvoiced	ustemt
verb	verb
voiced	stemt
vowel	vokal
word class	ordklasse
word order	ordstilling