

# INTRO TO LINGUISTICS

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# Kahoot Quiz

- <https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/d9480b9e-3884-445d-9959-e800bce8d55e>
- 1. Linguists speak many languages.
  - False: Linguists as scholars work to analyze language and figure out how it works and why we can speak it.
  - People who speak multiple languages are polyglots.
  - Many linguists work principally with one language.
  - Speaking multiple languages might be helpful to linguists to make comparisons across languages, read papers written in them, and see how broadly applicable theories are.
  - You wouldn't ask a geologist how many pet rocks he/she has but rather what area of geology interests him/her.
  - This is a good strategy for linguists as well. 😊

# Kahoot Quiz

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- 2. Some languages sound more beautiful than others.
  - FALSE: Je t'aime, ti amo, te quiero mucho! Sounds nice doesn't it?
  - If you swoon over sweet nothings whispered in French, Italian or Spanish, you're not alone.
  - But while learning to speak a language famed for its romance may increase your sex appeal, the reason for your preference of one vernacular over another may have little to do with how the sounds roll off the tip of your tongue.
  - Sociolinguists believe the attractiveness of a language is determined by how positively we view a particular group of people who share a cultural outlook.
  - If we have a positive perception of a particular community then we tend to have equally positive views of the language they speak.
  - Language value and attractiveness are linked to the prestige of the speaker, or the socioeconomic and mobility advantages the language affords.
  - Some sounds are more common across the world but that doesn't link to the specific perceptions we have about French and Italian. The idea that a language is more melodic, romantic, poetic and musical are derived from those communities and regions.
  - There are, however, specific sounds in many foreign languages that a native English speaker may find alien and therefore harder on the ear. Languages that have different linguistic structures, such as using tones or sounds that are not found in a listener's native tongue, are probably going to sound less enticing.

# Kahoot Quiz

- <https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/d9480b9e-3884-445d-9959-e800bce8d55e>
- 3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.
  - False: Languages are not easier or harder to learn. They are, however, more similar or different to your native language.
  - The tonal aspects of Mandarin and Cantonese, which don't exist in English, make it very difficult for native English speakers to master, and vice versa.
  - There are several different ways a language can be similar (or different) from another.
    - Tones
    - Writing system
    - Vocabulary (cognates)
    - Gender
    - Etc.

# Kahoot Quiz

• <https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/d9480b9e-3884-445d-9959-e800bce8d55e>

• 4. Everyone has an accent.

- True: Our accent tells other people who we are because it reflects the places we have been and the things we have done.
- But the construct of accent, like so many other things, is relative. We may only realize that others think we have an accent when we leave the place we came from and find ourselves among people who share a different background from our own.
- Some countries have one accent which is accepted as 'standard' and which enjoys higher social prestige than any other. This is true of RP (Received Pronunciation) in the UK, of standard French in France and of many countries that have evolved a broadcast standard for radio and television.
- We may feel that this national standard is accentless and that non-standard speakers, by contrast, have accents.
- Nevertheless, standards that have evolved in the broadcast industry have their roots in language varieties that already exist in distinct social groups and their institutions.
- To use one particular group's accent in broadcasting is to give that accent a wider reach than perhaps it had before, but the accent itself is no 'less' of an accent than any other, although it may represent groups and institutions with more political and economic power than groups whose members use another accent.

# Kahoot Quiz

- <https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/d9480b9e-3884-445d-9959-e800bce8d55e>
- 5. People who are bilingual have equal abilities in both languages
  - False: The idealized, perfectly balanced bilingual is for the most part a mythical figure that rarely exists in real life.

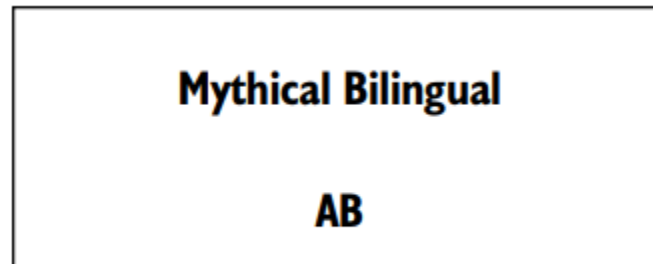


Figure 1. The Mythical Bilingual

- In Figure 1, same-size letters indicate that this bilingual is equally proficient in languages A and B.
- This would mean that whatever the individual could do in one language (recite childhood poems, pray, write academic papers, tell jokes, argue with a sibling) that person could do equally well in the other language. While absolutely equivalent abilities in two languages are theoretically possible, individuals seldom have access to two languages in exactly the same contexts in every domain of interaction.

# Kahoot Quiz

- <https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/d9480b9e-3884-445d-9959-e800bce8d55e>
- 5. People who are bilingual have equal abilities in both languages
  - False: There are many different types of bilinguals and that bilingual abilities fall along a continuum.
  - Bilingualism is a condition that essentially involves more than one competence, however small it might be.

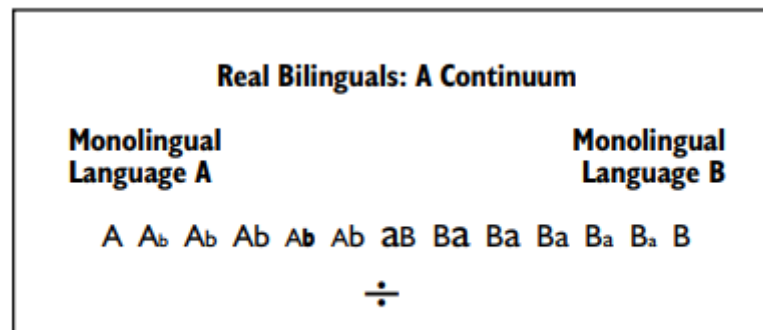


Figure 2. The Bilingual Continuum

# Language

- Language – so what? Why should we care?
- What is it that makes us human?
  - Walking on two legs? Living in society? Ability to love and hate?
  - To some degree, all of those.
  - But none is unique to the human species.
    - Birds walk on two legs.
    - Ants live in society.
    - My dog loved me but hated cats.
- Language distinguishes us from all other creatures.
- Every human, rich or poor, is capable of language.



# Language

- Each child learns his/her native tongue just by being exposed to the talk around them.
- Most children are fluent before they're 10, often in more than one language. They also grow up to master different styles of speech – from formal job interview talk to street slang.
- Language is so easy for children and so difficult for adults to learn.
- Certain areas of the brain specialize in language and children are born with the capacity to learn language.
- Children isolated from language growing up may never learn to speak well as an adult.
- Based on that evidence, many scientists believe that the capacity for learning language is genetic.

# Language and Linguistics

- Linguistics is both the most human of the sciences and the most scientific of the humanities
- Linguistics = the scientific study of language
- Language = Complex system of communication
  - Communication = exchange of information between two or more living creatures
  - Human language differs from other forms of communication by its complexity

# Some Approaches to the Scientific Study of Language

- Formal linguistics – focuses on language as an abstract system. Noam Chomsky is the most famous scholar in this area.
- Psycholinguistics – focus on the internal processes of language, with a great deal of focus on how languages are acquired, especially by children.
- Sociolinguistics – examines language as a social phenomenon, with particular attention to how people deploy their linguistic resources to establish identities. Also concerned with how language varies and language change.
- Applied Linguistics – interdisciplinary field of linguistics that identifies, investigates, and offers solutions to language-related real-life problems
  - Some related academic fields are education, psychology, communication research, anthropology, and sociology.
  - Second Language Acquisition – examines the process by which people learn a second language; the field of study is a sub-discipline of Applied Linguistics

# Formal Linguistics

- Generative Grammar
  - Universal grammar (UG)
    - Rules which apply to all language are innate rather than learned
    - More recent research and theories recognize the importance of both nature and nurture in the development of language.

Generative grammar is still quite influential, though it has been criticized for being too focused on English and other European languages, being too reliant on native-speaker intuitions, and not aligned with what we know from experimental language-acquisition and -processing data.

# Formal Linguistics

- Grammar
  - Set of rules that govern the composition of words, phrases, and clauses in one natural language
    - Rules do not govern individual language production but define what is allowed and disallowed in a given language
    - Though most speakers of a given language share the same grammar, there are usually differences between speakers and groups

# Formal Linguistics

- Descriptive rules
  - Describe a tendency of a language based on empirical evidence
  - Describes what a speaker of a language actually does
- Prescriptive rules
  - Instructs speakers of a language based on subjective preferences
  - Seek to define what a speaker of a language should do
- Examples: Spanglish, Portuguol, Chinglish, etc.
- Linguists are normally interested in descriptive rules.

# Psycholinguistics

- Combines the disciplines of psychology and linguistics
- Examines processes that occur in the brain while producing and perceiving written and spoken discourse
- Three primary processes investigated in this area
  - Language comprehension
  - Language production
  - Language acquisition

# Psycholinguistics

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/the-benefits-of-bilingualism.html?mcubz=1>
- Judith Kroll, Ellen Bialystok – bilingualism and the brain
- Through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people thought a second language was an interference, cognitively speaking, that hindered a child's intellectual and academic development
- Now, we know that interference is a blessing in disguise – it forces the brain to resolve internal conflict, giving the mind a workout that strengthens its cognitive muscles.



# Psycholinguistics

Example study – Tamar Gollan et al. (2011)

- 44 elderly Spanish-English bilinguals
- individuals with a higher degree of bilingualism — measured through a comparative evaluation of proficiency in each language — were more resistant than others to the onset of dementia and other symptoms of Alzheimer's disease
- the higher the degree of bilingualism, the later the age of onset.
- Nobody ever doubted the power of language. But who would have imagined that the words we hear and the sentences we speak might be leaving such a deep imprint?

# Psycholinguistics

## Benefits of Bilingual Education

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/11/29/497943749/6-potential-brain-benefits-of-bilingual-education>

- Two decades ago, advocates insisted on "English first" education.
  - Most famously, California passed [Proposition 227](#) in 1998. It was intended to sharply reduce the amount of time that English-language learners spent in bilingual settings.
- [Proposition 58](#), passed by California voters on Nov. 8, 2016
  - reversed that decision, paving the way for a huge expansion of bilingual education in the state that has the largest population of English-language learners.
- Some of the insistence on English-first was founded in research produced decades ago, in which bilingual students underperformed monolingual English speakers and had lower IQ scores.
- That research was "deeply flawed."
- Earlier research looked at socially disadvantaged groups
- This has been completely contradicted by recent research that compares more similar groups to each other

# Psycholinguistics

- Language and morality
- Does one's moral compass point in somewhat different directions depending on the language one is using at the time?
  - Several studies indicate this does indeed occur
  - <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-morality-changes-in-a-foreign-language/>
  - Example Geipel et al. (2015)
    - Volunteers read descriptions of acts that appeared to harm no one, but that many people find morally reprehensible—for example, stories in which siblings enjoyed entirely consensual and safe sex, or someone cooked and ate his dog after it had been killed by a car.
    - Those who read the stories in a foreign language (either English or Italian) judged these actions to be less wrong than those who read them in their native tongue.
    - 2 possible reasons:
      - When we use a foreign language, we unconsciously sink into the more deliberate mode simply because the effort of operating in our non-native language cues our cognitive system to prepare for strenuous activity.
      - childhood languages vibrate with greater emotional intensity than do those learned in academic settings. Thus, moral judgments made in a foreign language are less laden with emotional reactions that surface when we use a language learned in childhood.

# Sociolinguistics

- Approaches to sociolinguistics:
  - view language as a social/cultural phenomenon that cannot be separated from the context in which it is used.
  - are interested not only in language as an abstract system, but also in the people who actually speak the language.
  - require understanding of linguistic concepts. For example, we can't say anything useful about phonological or grammatical variation unless we understand how phonological and grammatical systems work.

# Sociolinguistics example: Linguistic Profiling

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJ778\\_tsqjs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJ778_tsqjs)
- Research can make a difference in people's lives!
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84k2iM30vbY>
- What messages have you internalized about these accents throughout your life?
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hCTI6JYtuo>
- Disney's audience is primarily children, and when Americans are taught from a young age to associate certain dialects with negativity, this can result in discrimination and can be linked to racism.

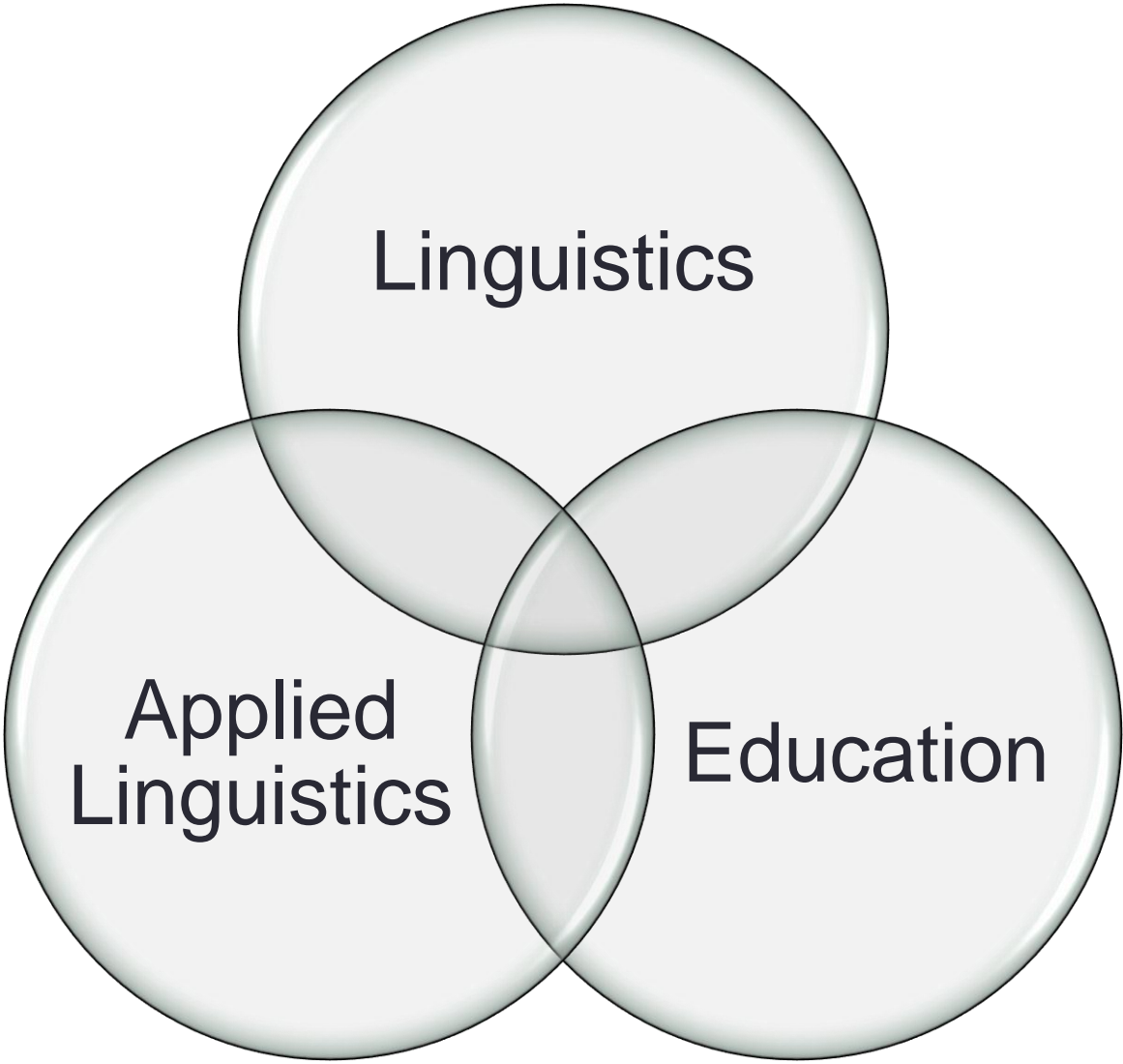
# What is Applied Linguistics?

- Applied Linguistics entails using what we know about language, about how it is used, and about how it is learned in order to solve some problem in the real world.
- Applied Linguistics uses language-related research in a wide variety of fields (e.g. language acquisition, language teaching, literacy, gender studies, language policy, speech therapy, discourse analysis, censorship, workplace communication, media studies, translation, lexicography, forensic linguistics).

# What problems are related to language?

Problems related to:

- language learning,
- language teaching,
- literacy,
- language contact (language & culture),
- language policy and planning,
- language assessment,
- language use,
- language and technology,
- translation and interpretation,
- language pathology.



Linguistics

Applied  
Linguistics

Education



# Intersection of Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition (within Applied Ling): My Dissertation

- Speech community of interest: Students studying abroad in Argentina
- Sociolinguistic variables - two ways of saying the same thing: the pronoun for you singular informal in Spanish: tú vs vos
- Corpus of language data from a representative sample of the community: interviews in Spanish with students studying abroad at Time 1, 2, 3
- Coding to account for influences on a speaker's choice of one or the other variant.
- Perform multivariate statistical analysis to determine which possible influences significantly affect the use of the variable.
- Interpret the quantitative results in terms of linguistic and/or social theory: greater social networks and higher proficiency level led to more use of vos. Used more in the present indicative than the imperative, more in questionnaires than in role plays.
- Implications: role of study abroad (SA) in language learning (LL), imp of SA pgms creating opps for social networks in SA, role of prof level in LL in SA