

**:: STRUCTURE ::**

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**2.0 OBJECTIVE**

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- The aim of this chapter is to make the under graduate students familiar with the basics of linguistics levels which will help them to study the language systematically while they may pursue their advanced study.

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**2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Language has been remained an imperative aspect of study since acquired by human species. It is always an unsolved puzzle that how language emerged in its form to mankind. However human intellect has deeply studied every aspect of language. Language is not static and homogenous. It is dynamic and it always comes to us in the developed form.

When we study language scientifically, it has become the subject matter of **linguistics**, where it is studied analytically and systematically. Language has a hierarchical structure means it is made up of smallest unit like a sound to the fullest structure like text or discourse. Thus, it can be studied as a different unit. Each unit can be considered and studied

separately as an individual linguistic level like: phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, pragmatics and discourse. In a way, these levels are interconnected. For instance, a single indivisible unit – a sound is a phoneme; while two or more phonemes combine together make a syllable or a morpheme. When morphemes occur together frame a meaningful word and words together form a sentence and sentences together make a piece of a written or oral text or discourse.

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## 2.2 LEVELS OF LINGUISTICS

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Now we know that to study language from a systematic aspect, it should be categorized as the various levels of linguistics. Each level has a set of rules and a perfect system. It helps us to understand each level separately and independently. Each level analyses one structure of language. To make it clearer, it can be tabularized in the following way:

Levels of Analysis	Levels of Structure
Phonetics and Phonology	Sound
Morphology	Word Formation
Syntax	Sentence Formation
Semantics	Meaning
Pragmatics	Contextual aspect of Meaning
Discourse	Connected Sentences

The above table shows us that the levels are interconnected and can be studied hierarchically. For example, a study of semantic level definitely requires a base of word formation i.e. morphology or studying a piece of discourse leads us to study every above levels of linguistics.

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## 2.3 PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

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Let's study language from the root level; phonetics is a scientific study of sounds. It studies the articulation of human speech mechanism. It also studies how the sounds are received by auditory mechanism. Each sound is phonetically described in two major categories: (1) vowel and (2) consonants. Further, these sounds are categorically described to distinguish from one another through three major categories: (i) Manner of articulation (ii) Manner of place (iii) whether the sound is voiced or voiceless.

Phonology is a systematic study of sounds of particular language i. e. sounds of Gujarati or English or Hindi. "It studies the combination of sounds into organized units of speech, the formation of syllable and larger units." It also studies classification made on the basis of the concept of the phoneme i.e. distinctive, contrasted sound unit. For instance, /p/, /t/, /k/. Each language has its own rules of the combination of sounds.

Syal and Jindal mentions that though phonology is considered to be the surface or superficial level of language (since it is concrete and not abstract as in the case of meaning), there are some aspects of it such as tone which contribute to the meaning of an utterance.

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## **2.4 MORPHOLOGY**

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Morphology studies various patterns of word formation. Morphemes which are made by the combination of distinctive sounds will frame a word. A morpheme is a minimal unit of a letter. It cannot be broken, even if it is, it will convey no sense. For instance, a word 'book', it's of a one morpheme. It has three sounds: /b/, /oi/ and /k/. The group of the phonemes makes up the single morpheme 'book', and if broken up, it will have no meaning. 'Books' is the word having two morphemes: 'book' + 's'. Morphology gives us the set of rules that deals with the combination of morphemes to form words. It includes suffixes, prefixes and changes that take place in the structure of words, for example: the morpheme 'get' changes to 'got'. These changes signify a change in tense. It means, words are not the smallest units of language either in terms of meaning or form. Morpheme is the smallest unit of language. It is the smallest unit of meaning as well as of grammatical function. Words and morpheme are the two lowest levels of structure in a grammar. The relationship between the levels is one of realization. Morpheme and morpheme combinations are realized as words.

Morphology level is linked to phonology on the one side and to semantic on another side. Above example of 'get' makes it clear that the change to 'got' involves a change in one of the sounds in this morpheme. It also adds a change in meaning: 'get' means the action 'get' + time present and 'got' means the action 'get' + 'time past'. It is to say that morphological changes often involve changes at the levels of both sound and meaning.

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## **2.5 SYNTAX**

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The third level syntax is about sentence formation. Here we study how words combine to form phrases, phrases combine to form clauses and clauses join to make sentence. Syntax gives us understanding about the set rules of positioning of elements in a sentence such as, noun, noun phrase, verb, verb phrase, or say, adverbial phrases.

A sentence must be composed of these elements arranged in a particular order. Syntax also attempts to describe how these elements function in the sentence i.e, their role in the sentence. For example, the word 'toy' is a noun; however in each of the following sentences it functions in different role.

- a) A toy is beautiful.
- b) The children love the toy.

In sentence (a) the word 'toy' functions as the subject of the sentence. While in sentence (b), it functions as the object.

“A sentence should be both grammatical and meaningful. For example, a sentence like ‘colorless green ideas sleep furiously.’ is grammatically correct but it is not meaningful. Thus, rules of syntax should be comprehensive enough to explain how sentences are constructed which are both grammatical and meaningful.” For studying a sentence, one must have an understanding of word formation i.e. morphology while a sentence must have a meaning so semantic understanding is also expected for syntactic study.

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## 2.6 SEMANTICS

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Semantics is the study of meaning in language. It is the area which concerns with the meanings of words and sentences. It is the most abstract level of analysis because meaning of the particular word or words exist in our mind. It means meaning is understood by one's knowledge of the world. In Phonology, we can observe sounds and sound patterns but meanings cannot be seen or observed. It can only be understood logically. For example, when we say, 'table', we mean a piece of furniture with a flat top and one or more legs. These identifiable characteristics make the use of 'table' appropriate but it is difficult to determine these identifiable characteristics. To cope with this problem of definition of meaning, semanticists have recognized a number of useful distinctions in the meaning of a word. They are:

1) The Denotative Meaning:

The denotative meaning of a word is its specific, exact meaning excluding all its extended uses. This is the literal meaning of a word. For example,

The fox is a cunning animal.

Here, in above example the word 'fox' is used in its denotative meaning to refer to a specific animal.

2) The Connotative Meaning:

A connotative meaning is any meaning which carries some special implication or association. This is the additional or literary meaning of a word. For Example,

Mary doesn't trust John, because he is such a fox.

Here, the word, 'fox' is used in a connotative meaning to imply a crafty person.

3) The Social Meaning:

This is the meaning that a word or phrase conveys about the circumstances of its use. Here, the meaning of the word is understood according to the situation in which it is used. For example, the words 'domicile', 'residence', 'abode', 'home' all refer to the same thing but

each word belongs to a particular situation of use. 'Domicile' is used in an official context, 'residence' in a formal context, 'abode' is a poetic use and 'home' is an ordinary use.

According to, Syal and Jindal, "Social meaning derives from an awareness of the style in which something is written or spoken. One has to understand the relationship between speaker and listener- whether that relationship is formal, official, casual, polite or friendly."

#### 4) The Thematic Meaning:

This type of meaning is conveyed by the way in which a speaker or writer organizes the message in terms of order, focus and emphasis. For example, to understand the meaning of Hamlet's soliloquy "to be or not to be" one has to understand the context of the play in which it is spoken. If a person reads this phrase "to be or not to be" without knowing the context of the play "Hamlet", then it will be misunderstood. In this play, it is a famous soliloquy spoken by Hamlet to convey his mental agony when he comes to know that his uncle is the murderer of his father. Throughout the play, he is in a state of confusion whether to live or not because of the betrayal from his own people. So, one has to know in which situation it is spoken to understand the exact meaning.

From this discussion, one can observe that it is easy to understand syntax because the sentence pattern is fixed in all languages. In English also, we have the fixed sentence pattern that follows subject, verb, object & adverbial but when it comes to understand semantics, one needs to apply his or her mind. In English language, some words are spelled the same but they have different meanings so one needs to understand these differences to study semantics. The above categorization will help us to understand the different level of meaning. Besides the above given categories, the meanings are also divided into two parts: 1) Literal meaning & 2) Literary Meaning.

One can realize this difference while translating any literary piece from the source language to target language. It is not possible to do word to word translation of a literary piece because it carries the connotative meaning. Thus, semantic is little complex item.

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## **2.7 PRAGMATICS**

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Semantics and Pragmatics both deal with the meaning. Semantics attempts to relate meaning to logic and truth while Pragmatics attempts to relate meaning in context of utterance. It views language as action which is performed by speakers. Here, the context of the utterance is important. The meaning of the sentence depends on the intention of the speaker towards the listener. It may include prejudice, gender-bias, the previous knowledge shared by speaker and listener. The meaning that a speaker wants to convey is not there in the message itself but his intention matters

a lot. In short, it is about how the same word can have different meanings in different situations.

For example, the teacher said to a student, “Oh! You have come so early today.” Here, the tone or the intention of the teacher is important. He actually wants to say that the student is late. It cannot be understood from the written sentence, but one has to observe the gestures of the speaker as well. That is why it is called a speech-act. It also depends on the basis of the intonation, that is to say rise and fall of the tone in a given sentence. It can be observed in the following example:

- a) Have **you** played this piano?
- b) Have you **played** this piano?
- c) Have you played **this piano**?

All of the above sentences are similar in words and patterns but as we shift the trace from ‘you’ to ‘played’ and ‘this piano’ in sentence (a), (b) & (c) respectively, meanings get changed accordingly.

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## 2.8 LET’S SUM UP

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Thus, all these levels of linguistics help us to understand the aspects of language. Nevertheless, this unit provides only surface understanding and information about the levels. Each one, phonetics, syntax etc, is having a great tradition and also a separate school of linguistics. Here it is expected that this primary information of the levels may raise interest to study further in this area.

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## 2.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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**Que: 1. Complete the following sentences by choosing the appropriate alternatives given below each statement:**

- 1) Linguistics is the.....study of language.
  - a) Historical
  - b) Scientific
  - c) Social
  - d) General
- 2) The smallest unit of speech is.....
  - a) Morpheme
  - b) Phoneme
  - c) Phonology
  - d) Discourse
- 3) The smallest grammatical unit is called.....
  - a) Morpheme
  - b) Phoneme
  - c) Phonology
  - d) Morphology

- 4) What is defined as “the study of sentence structure?”
  - a) Morphology
  - b) Semantics
  - c) Phonology
  - d) Syntax
- 5) Which of these terms refers to the study of speech sounds of a given language and their function within the sound system of that language?
  - a) Phonetics
  - b) Phonology
  - c) Syntax
  - d) Morphology
- 6) The study of meaning and its manifestation in language is normally referred to as.....
  - a) Syntactic
  - b) Semantics
  - c) Pragmatics
  - d) Phonetics
- 7) Which of the following is not a grammatical unit?
  - a) Morpheme
  - b) Phrase
  - c) Clause
  - d) Syllable
- 8) .....deals with the contextual aspects of meaning in particular situations.
  - a) Discourse
  - b) Pragmatics
  - c) Semantics
  - d) Syntax
- 9) The suffix ‘-ing’ is an example of a/an.....
  - a) Phoneme
  - b) Auxiliary verb
  - c) Morpheme
  - d) Gerund
- 10) At this level, we analyze inter-sentential links that form a connected or cohesive text. It is called.....
  - a) Graphology
  - b) Lexicology
  - c) Discourse
  - d) Pragmatic

**Answers: 1 – b, 2- b, 3 – a, 4 – d, 5 – b, 6 – b, 7 – d, 8 – b, 9 – c, 10 - c**

**Que: 2 Write the answers in brief:**

- 1) What do you understand by the term ‘linguistics’?
- 2) What is difference between ‘phonetics’ and ‘phonology’?
- 3) Which are the levels of linguistics analysis?
- 4) What is ‘discourse’?
- 5) Which are two major categories of the sounds?

**Write Short-notes:**

- 1) Linguistics is a science
- 2) How are different linguistic levels linked to each other?- Discuss.
- 3) Phonology
- 4) Pragmatics

**Answer in detail:**

- 1) Write a note on morphology and its kinds.
- 2) What is semantics? Explain different types meaning in semantics with suitable examples.

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**2.10 KEY TERMS**

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<b>Phoneme</b>	Any of the perpetually distinct units of sound in a specified language that distinguish one word from another is a phoneme.
<b>Phonology</b>	Phonology is a scientific study of sounds of a particular language. It is the system of contrastive relationships among the speech sounds that constitute the fundamental components of a language.
<b>Morpheme</b>	It is the smallest unit of meaning that a word in a particular language can be divided into.

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**2.11 SUGGESTED READING**

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- Syal, P & Jindal D.V. *An Introduction to Linguistics*. Prentice: New Delhi, 1999
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