A framework for the study of linguistics

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(1) What is linguistics?

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Defining a field

- What is it?
- Where does it fit in?
- Why does it matter?
Fields, disciplines, foundational questions

- Are what we learn mere bits and pieces?
- Do the parts have any relation?
- How does one field link to another?
- How does one field link to the world and our future profession?
Thus….

- Linguistics needs a framework, in order to provide
- a sense of what the discipline is, and what makes it coherent across its various subdisciplines;
- what its relation is to our future needs
Fields, disciplines

- Field of study = academic discipline (mathematics, economics, sociology…)
- “Field” denotes
  - limits
  - boundaries
  - demarcation
- “Discipline” adds
  - diverse content
  - variation in methodology
Demarcating a discipline

- define it in such a way that we
- distinguish it from other fields;
- which is not a disciplinary-internal, but
- a foundational/philosophical undertaking
Foundational issues

- Foundational questions ask for philosophical answers.
- Philosophical issues touch the basis of our work, providing
- a foundational framework for a discipline.
Foundational frameworks

- Avoidance of foundational questions is not a good idea!
  - Victims of fashion

- Foundational answers tell us
  - how a field coheres
  - what we need to assess new approaches/directions
For our future professional needs...

- we want a framework that enables us to assess
  - merits / advantages
  - demerits / disadvantages of new approaches / directions
- not one that is out of date / in disfavour
Three questions

- How do we define linguistics?
- How does linguistics relate to other disciplines?
- How does linguistics relate to our professional lives?
Defining a discipline

- Disciplines each study a unique dimension / mode of experience.
- Dimensions = modes / facets / aspects of things
- Vice versa: Things have / exhibit a variety of aspects.
- We cannot define disciplines in terms of concrete things.
When we analyse reality...
... we notice both the unique modes and the interconnections.

We observe the different dimensions of our experience, as well as how they are related.
Natural dimensions of experience

- sensitive
- organic
- physical
- kinematic
- spatial
- numerical
Cultural dimensions of experience

- historical
- logical
- lingual
- social
- economic
- aesthetic
- juridical
- ethical
- faith
All dimensions of experience

historical
logical
sensitive
organic
physical
kinematic
spatial
numerical

lingual
social
economic
aesthetic
juridical
ethical
faith

All dimensions of experience
Distinguishable modes: defining kernels

- numerical  ➔ discreteness
- spatial     ➔ extension
- kinematic   ➔ regular movement
- physical   ➔ energy-effect
- biotic     ➔ organic life
- sensitive ➔ feeling
Distinguishable modes: defining kernels

- logical
- historical
- lingual
- social
- economic
- aesthetic
- juridical
- ethical
- faith
- analysis
- formative power
- expression by means of signs
- interaction
- frugality
- harmony
- retribution
- love
- belief
Disciplines: distinguishable modes

- mathematics
- kinematics, physics
- physics, chemistry
- biology
- psychology

- numerical & spatial
- kinematic
- physical
- biotic
- sensitive
Disciplines: distinguishable modes

- logic  ➔ logical
- history  ➔ historical
- linguistics  ➔ lingual
- sociology  ➔ social
- economics  ➔ economic
- aesthetics  ➔ aesthetic
- jurisprudence  ➔ juridical
- ethics  ➔ ethical
- theology  ➔ faith
Natural and cultural sciences

- Both are scientific disciplines.
- All examine a unique mode of experience.
- Each unique dimension guarantees unique angle for concept-formation.
- Unique angle gives basis for relation to other fields.
Relationships between linguistics and other disciplines

- Each dimension related to others.
- Each harbours analogical reflection of others.
- Each refers to / reflects others.
- Such references / echoes / reflections = analogies
How does the lingual mode reflect others?
Lingual refers to…

lingual

numerical

position

movement

system

logical

kinematic

spatial

numerical

meaning

social

economic

communication

economy
Some examples of analogies

- Lingual *system* (De Saussure)
- Lingual *position* and *sequence* (structuralism)
- Lingual *constancy, recursiveness, movement* (transformational grammar)
- Lingual *communication, acceptability, spheres of discourse*
All dimensions reflect others
Nothing is absolute...

...and everything is connected to everything else. The lingual is therefore related to all other dimensions.
Central focus, many reflections

… the image of the external skeleton of the ammonite in the stone forms a series of pleats. In the same way that their successive order creates a focus on a central point, the ‘primitives’ of a discipline direct and concentrate the process of our scientific thinking … (freely translated; Hommes 1972, inside cover).
Lingual analogies / reflections (1)

- **Lingual** aspect refers to **numerical** in the following concept:
  
  \[ \text{unity within a multiplicity of lingual rules and lingual facts} \]

- This concept ("unity within…") = **lingual system**.

- "Unity within multiplicity" = original numerical concept

- Viewed from lingual angle = **lingual system**
A variety of lingual systems

- sound system
- form system
  - morpheme system
  - syntactic system
- meaning system
- discourse system
Lingual systems at work (1)

- Sound system provides rules for regular formation of, e.g., plural:
  
  /z/ /s/ /iz/
  bars facts voices

- Forming lingually meaningful units (plurals, in this case): add |s| morpheme to root (stem).

- Thus: form system + sound system combine and interact.
combination and interaction of sound system with form system creates not only a unity within a multiplicity of interacting lingual rules (2) but also a unity within a multiplicity of lingual facts / objects (= plurals)
Lingual systems at work (3)

Regularly available sounds
/z/ /s/ /iz/

combine with
form(s)

new lingual units
(plurals)
systems work not only to create new words;
systems also define relationships between new words:

\[\text{bar/bars; fact/facts; voice/voices}\]

\[\text{singular : plural}\]
systematic difference in meaning (i.e.
difference regulated by a system)
Three interacting lingual systems

- **sound** system
  - interacting with
  - **formation of plurals** system
  - regulating difference in
  - **semantic** system
How many interacting lingual systems are there?

- Many more!
- And Complex systems theory also tries to tease out the many relationships where lingual subsystems interact with developmental, cognitive, social and other systems.
Lingual refers to…

- lingual
- numerical
- position
- movement
- system
- meaning
- logical
- kinematic
- spatial
- numerical
- communication
- social
- economic
- economy
Lingual analogies / reflections (2)

- **Lingual** aspect refers to **spatial** in the following set of concepts:
  
  - lingual extension / lingual range / lingual field
  - lingual dimension / lingual position / lingual sequence

- Semantic field theory, e.g., allows us to plot overlapping and divergent *ranges* of meaning for words.
Ranges of meaning of dark/dusk/black

1) It was already dark / dusk [but not *black] when he got home.

2) When he got home, he was in a dark / black [but not *dusk] mood.
Overlapping lingual ranges of meaning

dusk

dark

black
The ranges of meaning of synonyms or near synonyms

English lexicon has three main historical sources: Old English, French, and Latin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Latin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>rise</em></td>
<td><em>mount</em></td>
<td><em>ascend</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ask</em></td>
<td><em>question</em></td>
<td><em>interrogate</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Synonyms: more overlapping ranges of meaning

rise

ascend

mount

ask

interrogate

question
The semantic ranges of prepositions in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference to ...</th>
<th>movement</th>
<th>position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>point</strong> (one dimension, combining with...)</td>
<td>to $\rightarrow$ X</td>
<td>at $\circ X$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>surface</strong> (two dimensions, combining with...)</td>
<td>on(to) $\rightarrow$</td>
<td>on $\bullet$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>volume</strong> (three dimensions, combining with...)</td>
<td>in(to) $\rightarrow$</td>
<td>in $\boxed{\bullet}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lingual extension (1)

- Add (extend the root of noun with) suffix, form plural:
  
  Add –s to *dog*, *plate*, *drink*: *dogs*, *plates*, *drinks*

- Thus, lingual extension:
  
  from singular → plural
Lingual extension (2)

- Add (extend the root of verb with) suffix, form past tense:
  Add –ed to *walk*, *talk*, *kick*: *walked*, *talked*, *kicked*

- Thus, lingual extension:
  from present tense → past tense
### Lingual position and sequence

Fixed, regular sequence in lingual system for formation of:
- plurals
- past tense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence / form</th>
<th>First position</th>
<th>Final position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plural form</td>
<td>root</td>
<td>-s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past tense form</td>
<td>root</td>
<td>-ed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sequencing of discrete lingual objects

- Lingual objects are discrete (countable).
- Morphemes are discrete lingual elements.
- Morphemes can be arranged sequentially.
- Mathematical connection: 1 comes before 2, 2 before 3, … 12 after 11, 13 after 12…
Looking at number and space...

... discreteness and continuity, from a *lingual* angle
The reflection of the kinematic aspect of movement...

... within the lingual dimension of reality = 

lingual regularity / consistency

For example:

- regular formation in English of plural, past tense, etc.

- ‘irregular’ plurals (men, children) and past tenses (caught, went) are consistently the same
Echoes of other dimensions...

... within the lingual aspect of experience include:

- *lingual power*
- *lingual development*
- *lingual cognition*
- *lingual identity*
- *lingual form*...
The lingual dimension of reality

- is linked to all other dimensions.
- Linguistics is therefore linked in principle to all other disciplines.
- It has a unique view/angle on analysis of reality: the lingual.
An initial assumption

Linguistics is a single discipline because its field of study is not language, but the *lingual* dimension of reality.
Most students will have an enduring interest in language in their future professions:

- speech therapists, interpreters, language teachers, lexicographers, editors, journalists, translators, course designers, test developers, …

Two straightforward illustrations:

- lexicography (word/lexeme definition)
- language teaching (Bloomfield, Halliday)
Four further illustrations

- *Forensic linguistics*: stylistic and discourse comparison and identification to provide legal evidence.
- *Language test developers* need a construct (theoretical blueprint) of language ability.
- *Speech* therapists and *pathologists* rely on theory.
- *Corpus linguists* need linguistic distinctions to handle large amounts of lingual data.
Yet! Care is needed...

- Linguistic insight cannot be “applied” to solve all kinds of language problems.
- There is a separate discipline of applied linguistics that focuses not on the lingual, but on the technical/formative dimension of experience.
- “Linguistic” solutions can in fact detrimentally affect solutions, lead to bad designs.
- Best is to stay abreast of trends in linguistic theory and not fall victim to scientistic expectations.
Two initial definitions

(1) Linguistics is the study of language
(2) Linguistics is the theoretical study of language.
What about the interest in language of ...

- Acoustic physics?
- Electronic engineering?
- Architecture?
- Psychology?
- Jurisprudence?
- Theology?
- Algebra and mathematics?
Which aspect shall we focus on?

The phenomena of language can be studied from different points of view. Dozens of sciences can study linguistic phenomena ... from as many points of view – each one putting these phenomena into relation with phenomena of some other sort. What aspect of the phenomena, if any, is left to linguistics as its exclusive property? (Wells, 1966: 15)
Linguistics should attempt to grasp language, not as a conglomerate of non-linguistic (e.g., physical, physiological, psychological, logical, sociological) phenomena, but as a self-sufficient totality, a structure sui generis (Hjelmslev, 1963: 5f.).
A third definition

(3) Linguistics is the theoretical study of an aspect X of language (where X has not yet been defined).
Data for “theoretical” linguistics

- in De Saussure’s definition = *langue*, the **system** of language, as it regulates the signs of *parole* (speech).
- in early transformational generative grammar = **intuition** of the native speaker.
- in complex systems theory = language **resources** inherent in many interacting systems.
(4) Linguistics is the theoretical study of the lingual aspect of language, where ‘lingual’ refers to *expression related to the understanding of signs.*
More abstract definition allows us to account for a wide spectrum of linguistic subdisciplines.

First one to benefit: study of sound system phonetics → phonology
From phonetics to phonology

- From concrete speech sound (as in IPA) to abstract phoneme
- Phonetic unit (speech sound):
  - clear (l) as in long and leg is phonetically distinguishable from dark (l) as in build and veld
- Phoneme = unit of sound that allows us to distinguish different words
  - Only one /l/ needed: lit / bit; land / sand
  - At the phonological level, clear and dark (l) are allophones
Thus: a remarkable economy of description

... is possible as a result of the abstraction

- The first benefit, among many to follow, of a focus, after De Saussure, on the abstract sign system of language, on the lingual dimension of experience.
The hierarchical, levelled character of language

- sounds combine to form
- forms that combine to form
- words that combine to form
- phrases & clauses that have
- meaning which is embedded in...
Linguistic levels and enquiry

- Sound (phonological) system
- Form (morphological) system
- Word (lexical) system
- Phrase & clause (syntactic) system
- Meaning (semantic) system
Thus: a variety of linguistic subdisciplines

... all focusing on form

- phonology
- morphology & lexicography
- syntax
- semantics
... and there are more...

... focussing on the disclosure of the lingual aspect in/by social interaction (sociolinguistics):

- phonology
- morphology & lexicography
- syntax
- semantics
- pragmatics
- discourse analysis
- text linguistics
- conversation analysis
A broadening and disclosure of linguistics…
... not only formal, but social dimensions of the lingual

... and the latter disclose and open up the meaning of the former social and other dimensions

formal

lingual

formal linguistics

sociolinguistics
Another reason why these definitions are wrong

(1) Linguistics is the study of language.

(2) Linguistics may be defined as the scientific study of language
Linguistics focuses not only...

- ... on the lingual *object* (language), but also on lingual *subjects*, who communicate by means of language.
- Cf. too psycholinguistics, and the investigation of language acquisition by individual.
And a last point about ‘data’

- ‘lingual’ does not restrict us to the investigation of speech.
- An example from discourse analysis:
  A: What’s the time?
  B: ...(pause)... It’s five o’clock
- Lingual ‘moves’ may be non-verbal, but lingually meaningful and significant
Linguistics investigates...

- both verbal and non-verbal data, events, actions, when they are meaningful or significant.
- ‘Language’ can be verbal (based in sound or print) or non-verbal (based in the bodily musculature).
A foundational perspective on things lingual will focus linguistics on a variety of subdisciplines:

- phonology,
- morphology,
- syntax,
- semantics,
- pragmatics,
- sociolinguistics,
- psycholinguistics…
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