

# Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>General Editors' Preface</i>	x
<b>1 Beginning Linguistics</b>	1
<b>2 The Linguistic Context</b>	12
2.1 Language and competence	12
2.2 The functions of language	21
2.2.1 Micro functions	21
2.2.2 Macro functions	40
2.3 Final summary	44
Further reading	44
Notes	45
<b>3 Studying Sound</b>	46
3.1 Introduction: the nature of sound	46
3.2 Approaching speech sounds	50
3.3 Sounds and the alphabet	54
3.4 Developing a phonemic alphabet	60
3.4.1 Minimal pairs	65
3.5 The phonemic alphabet	66
3.5.1 Describing phonemes	69
3.6 Sounds in connected speech	79
3.7 Final summary	82
Further reading	83
Notes	83
<b>4 Studying Syntax</b>	84
4.1 Introduction: beginning syntax	84
4.2 Formalist approaches to syntax	91
4.2.1 Developing a constituent grammar	94
4.3 Functional approaches to syntax	112
4.3.1 Developing a functional grammar	114
4.4 Conclusion and final summary	124

Further reading	125
Note	126
<b>5 Studying Meaning</b>	127
5.1 Introduction: the problem of 'meaning'	127
5.2 Studying semantics	131
5.2.1 Working with sense	133
5.2.2 Sense relations	140
5.2.3 Processes of semantic change	148
5.2.4 The role of reference	151
5.3 Studying pragmatics	153
5.3.1 The cooperative principle	157
5.3.2 Speech acts	160
5.4 Final conclusion and summary	162
Further reading	164
<b>6 Studying Linguistics Further</b>	166
6.1 Introduction	166
6.2 Studying more sound	167
6.2.1 Distinctive feature analysis	167
6.2.2 Intonation	170
6.3 Studying more syntax	176
6.3.1 Morphology	176
6.3.2 X bar syntax	179
6.3.3 Transformational grammar	191
6.4 Studying more meaning	194
6.4.1 Meaning and syntax	194
6.4.2 Meaning and logic	197
6.5 Studying linguistic branches	204
6.5.1 Studying sociolinguistics	204
6.5.2 Studying stylistics	210
6.5.3 Studying psycholinguistics	214
Further reading	217
Note	218
<b>7 How to Write a Linguistics Essay</b>	219
<i>Appendix: The International Phonetic Alphabet</i>	227
<i>Glossary</i>	228
<i>References</i>	242
<i>Index</i>	244

# 1 Beginning Linguistics

If you are just starting your studies in linguistics the first piece of advice I have may seem rather odd. It is this: **beware of all books on linguistics**. And that includes the one you are now reading. A healthy scepticism is not a bad thing. Most books on linguistics raise expectations of understanding which they cannot fulfil. This is not entirely their fault, of course. There is an undeniable technical and theoretical base to the subject, and negotiating through this whilst still remaining reasonably coherent is not easy. But in spite of all the technical terminology, linguistics is not a science. It's a pity that the subject doesn't have a different name. We tend to think of disciplines ending in 'ics' – e.g. statistics, mathematics, physics – as having a precise scientific core consisting of unchallengeable facts. Linguistics is not like that. Neither, of course, strictly speaking, are mathematics, statistics, or physics. Indeed, many scientists, nowadays, would question this view of science. Nevertheless, it's important to bear in mind that the subject matter of linguistics, language, is made up. Words do not grow out of the ground, they haven't evolved like matter from the interaction of natural elements. And whilst there is much to suggest that the structures and processes which enable language to develop are inborn, there is still a very important sense in which language is human-made. It is our possession in a way that nothing else is. And the process of making up, or inventing, never stops.

It's as well to remember this when government bodies go on, as they periodically do, about 'bad' English and the importance of maintaining standards. The question we should be asking is 'whose language is it anyway?' Language is one of the few truly democratic forces left to us. It may be used as an instrument of oppression, when one nation colonises or annexes another, but it has an unerring ability to turn on its handler. We have only to look at how international varieties of English are flourishing around the world in former colonies, from the Indian sub-continent to the Caribbean, to see the democratising influences of the language. And even in England, although it is sometimes argued that the combined forces of the media and public schools are producing a uniform

pronunciation, the truth is that conservative speech patterns are themselves subtly changing under the influence of newly emergent accents. Despite institutional pressure and manipulation, language is ultimately a law unto itself. Samuel Johnson, the eighteenth-century writer, and one of the first people to attempt to control linguistic behaviour, reflects soberly in the preface to his *Dictionary of the English Language* on the failure of nations to 'fix' their languages:

With this hope, however, academies have been instituted, to guard the avenues of their languages, to retain fugitives, and repulse intruders; but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain; sounds are too volatile and subtle for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind are equally the undertakings of pride unwilling to measure its desires by its strength. (Johnson, 1958, pp. 233–4)

Despite Johnson's lament about 'the boundless chaos of a living speech' (p. 219), however, language is not chaotic. There are rules governing linguistic behaviour just as there are everything else in life. They may not be the rules which people might wish to impose on us, but they are rules none the less. It is these rules which linguists are concerned with studying. Perhaps an analogy might help here. Imagine that I am attending an important function at my place of work. One of the things I have to do is decide what to wear. If there is a dress code I have to find out what it is in order to avoid embarrassing myself along with everybody else. Let's say it's a suit and tie affair. Now I may of course decide that wearing a suit and tie is rather stuffy and turn up instead in jeans and a tee-shirt. The reaction of people to this will inevitably vary. Some will think it refreshingly informal, whilst others will consider it 'bad form'. But no one will think me undressed. I have clothes on in all the right places even if some people don't like what I am wearing. If, however, I were to arrive with my underpants around my head, my trousers round my neck and my shirt tied round my waist I could be accused of being undressed, as well as running a serious risk of being locked up. There are two sorts of rules here. One is a rule about which part of the body, trousers, for example, are worn on, and the other is about what kind of trousers are worn. The first we could consider a clothing rule, and the second a social rule. The first one is not likely to change; it is doubtful that we will ever get a situation where it is considered normal to wear trousers around one's neck. The second, however, is changing all the time. There are many more occasions now when people dress casually where previously they would have dressed formally.

And it is similarly the case with language. Sometimes you will hear people object that certain expressions or constructions are ‘not English’ or ‘ungrammatical’. Some teachers still like to say this about *ain't* or the use of the double negative, as in *I ain't got no money*. But this is not so. Something is only ungrammatical if it fails to follow a rule in the way it is formed. *I ain't got no money* doesn't follow the same rule in its construction as *I haven't any money* but it's not without one. People who use this construction wouldn't dream of saying *got I have money n't no*, which would be uninterpretable. Someone who produced that would be like the hypothetical person mentioned above, wearing his clothes in all the wrong places. And, as in the clothing example, there are two sorts of rules here: a linguistic sort and a social sort. This is an important distinction to make because it's easy to mix them up. We mustn't confuse linguistic judgements with social ones. Of course, some people will attempt to prove that the double negative is ungrammatical by saying it's illogical, ‘two negatives make a positive’. But no one in the entire history of its use has ever understood it in that way. Up until the end of the Middle Ages it was a regular feature of English, as anyone who has studied Chaucer knows. Here is Chaucer, for example, in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, bemoaning the fact that people can no longer see fairies: ‘But now kan **no** man se **none** elves mo’ (‘but now no one can see no more elves’). The double negative was simply an emphatic way of negating something. What we have done in standard speech over the centuries is to weaken it. Other languages, like French, have resisted this, except in colloquial speech, where, ironically, it is the single negative which is non-standard.

The second piece of advice I wish to give therefore is this: **learn to think linguistically**. This doesn't mean ignoring social rules. They obviously have their place. We might want to argue about what that place is but they are an undeniable fact of life. There are some occupations where using forms like *ain't*, or double negatives, or saying *I done that* instead of *I did that*, could cost you your job. Oddly enough we have become a little more tolerant of certain accents than we have of non-standard grammar. It is quite common nowadays to hear the weather forecast in a regional accent on television, although more prestigious accents are still reserved for the main news. We need to know about social rules, therefore, but it is important to recognise that they are simply conventions. What weight we give to them is entirely relative. In ten or twenty years time, they could be less or more important. There is nothing to stop the Queen giving her Christmas broadcast in jeans, just as there is nothing to stop her saying *me and my husband*. No clothing, or linguistic rule, would be

broken. The publishing world, except in the case of creative writing, sticks rigorously to standard grammar, and one can see why. Using a uniformly accepted style is clearly convenient and runs less risk of offending anyone. In writing this book I have used standard forms although you will find many more contractions, *haven't*, *mustn't*, *isn't*, *it's*, than were acceptable some years ago. And I have several sentences which begin with *and* – like this one. The nature of social rules, and the way in which they operate, is itself a fascinating study and some areas of linguistics, notably sociolinguistics, are more concerned with them than others. But compared with linguistic rules they are only of fractional significance. The rules which enable us to produce either *I haven't any money*, or *I ain't got no money* are far more complex and profound than those which would discriminate against one in favour of the other.

The best place to start an investigation of the differences between social and linguistic judgements about language use is with your own speech habits. Try making a list of things you say which people object to and see if you can categorise them in terms of the nature of the objections and the contexts in which they are made. Some objections might be purely on grounds of politeness, like saying *what?* instead of *pardon?* when something is misheard. Others might concern the use of non-standard forms, as for example, *mine's better than what yours is* or *he done it very nice*. And some might entail a fine point of grammar quite impenetrable to all except those making the objection. Like most people, I can remember as a child being told to say *may I leave the table?* not *can I leave the table?* and failing to see the difference, let alone its importance. Picking others up on minor points of language use is very much a national pastime. People seize with glee on any deviation in spelling, pronunciation, or expression as if it were some failure of character or intelligence. This is partly because in England, at any rate, language use is unfortunately bound up with issues of class. Using 'incorrect' forms is frequently considered an indication of being lower class, and no one wants to be thought that.

If you do this exercise you will find that part of the problem of categorising your 'deviant' speech habits lies in the terms 'correct/incorrect' themselves. Apart from being very vague, they inevitably suggest social approval or disapproval and as such blur any distinction we might want to make between social and linguistic judgements. The whole notion of correctness is too prescriptive to be of any use linguistically. Not surprisingly, therefore, you will rarely find linguists referring to it, except in a social sense. They prefer to talk instead of usages being **well-formed** or **ill-formed**. A particular usage is only ill-formed if it is not generated by

a grammatical rule. Using this criterion, all the examples above are perfectly well-formed even though at first glance they might not appear to be so. Those who regularly produce forms such as *he done it very nice*, for example, are not ignorant of the existence of *did*. They will continue to say *he did do it* not *he done do it* (unless they are speaking Caribbean English). It is simply that a different rule is operating about when to use the past participle (*done*), as opposed to the past tense form (*did*). And as for the use of an adjective instead of an adverb, *nice* rather than *nice*ly, this also occurs sometimes in **Standard English** – *come quick*, not *quickly*, and *open the window wide*, not *widely*. We can find frequent similar uses in Shakespeare: ‘How sweet [not “sweetly”] the moonlight sleeps upon this bank’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, V.i.54).

‘Well-formed’ and ‘ill-formed’ are terms which encapsulate linguistic judgements. We need another set of terms, however, to encapsulate social ones. In 1965 the linguist Noam Chomsky introduced the terms **acceptable/unacceptable**. The notion of ‘acceptability’ offers a much better way of coping with variant forms than that of ‘correctness’. Using it as a criterion we could say that all of the expressions in the last but one paragraph,

*what?*  
*mine’s better than what yours is.*  
*he done it very nice.*  
*can I leave the table?*

are of varying acceptability depending on individual taste and conventions of politeness and context. Any usage which is ill-formed must of necessity be unacceptable whereas the reverse is not the case. The consequence of this is that we can categorise *he done it very nice*, for example, as well-formed, but unacceptable, if used in a BBC news broadcast. Between friends, however, it is both well-formed and acceptable.

The difference between concepts of well-formedness and acceptability on the one hand, and correctness on the other, is that the former are descriptive, rather than prescriptive, in character. That is, they seek to establish rules, whether of the social or linguistic kind, from actual use rather than from the pronouncements of some external authority. But, if that is the case, the question arises ‘in what sense are they rules?’ If they are merely describing what exists, how can that constitute a set of rules? In the case of social rules a better term, as suggested earlier, would probably be ‘conventions’. We could argue that it is a matter of social convention that newscasters avoid non-standard grammar. Conventions operate by a kind of unconscious agreement between the

parties involved. The matter is more complicated, however, with linguistic rules, to which we have said that the terms well/ill-formed apply. What gives a linguistic rule its authority? A linguist might well reply, 'the language', in that a sentence like *got I have money n't no* is linguistically impossible, but we are entitled to probe a little further I think.

To begin with, linguistic rules are not immutable; they do change over time and across dialects. Consider, for example, the sentence *they disappeared him*, and ask yourselves whether it is well- or ill-formed. I am guessing that you would judge it to be ill-formed, that is, not linguistically possible, and many conservative grammars would agree with you. They would do so on the grounds that *disappear* is an intransitive verb, in other words, it can't take an object – you don't disappear something. Verbs are quite frequently classified into transitive and intransitive according to whether they have objects; so the verb *hit* is transitive – something has to be hit. Verbs such as *fall* and *die*, on the other hand, are intransitive, in that they cannot take an object – you don't *fall* or *die* something. According to this grammatical account, *disappear* is a similar kind of verb: *he disappeared* is complete, whereas *he disappeared him* is nonsense. However, it isn't nonsense to an increasingly large number of people. In some parts of the world *to disappear someone* means to make them vanish, usually in highly mysterious circumstances. It's a usage which has been popularised by the media, in particular the American film industry. So, we are faced with a dilemma here. We either pronounce the American usage incorrect and seek to outlaw it, which is the approach a prescriptive grammar might take, or, because we are taking a descriptive approach, we decide it is well-formed but then are faced with having to alter the rules and declare it transitive. And the problem doesn't end there, because there are other verbs which have this slippery habit of crossing over. If we look again at *fall*, for example, it's possible for that to be used transitively in Nigerian English. A Nigerian can say *don't fall me down*, meaning don't cause me to fall over. We should have to say *don't push/knock me over*, but the meaning there is subtly different.

If it is the case that particular communities can change the way in which words behave, is there any real point in talking about linguistic rules? Isn't it just a free for all? The answer to this is 'no', and we must realise why this is so. What we are witnessing in these innovations is the grammar of English growing with use. There's an important point here and one which, as students of linguistics, we have to keep hold of. The popular view of grammar sees it as something mechanical, the learning of which is akin to learning the laws of thermodynamics. But in reality grammar is organic, it resembles a living thing in its ability to produce

fresh matter apparently without end. What we term 'rules' are not so much laws, as linguistic patterns of behaviour governing the operation of English. Every speaker of English contributes to these, for not only do we speak the language, but in a more subtle sense, the language speaks through us. Rules are open to interpretation and negotiation, whereas laws, being immutable, are not.

But you're probably wondering where this leaves the issue of transitive and intransitive verbs. Well, the important thing about innovations is that they make us look more closely at the rules to see how they can be modified in order to take account of the new evidence. And what we begin to discover when we look more closely at verbs is that being transitive or intransitive is an operation potentially open to the great majority, and possibly all, of them. In other words, rather than classify them into transitive and intransitive, it's better to talk of transitive and intransitive *uses*. Those which we class as intransitive are simply the ones for which we have not yet discovered a transitive use. In the case of *disappear* we now have done this. The sinister process by which some governments cause people to disappear without trace has led to the verb developing a transitive sense. And just as some verbs can extend their grammatical range, others may contract theirs. Today, the verb *like* is only used transitively, the sentence *I like* is incomplete – we must like something or someone. In Shakespeare's time, however, it was quite normal for the verb *like* to be used without an object. In his preface to *The Devil is an Ass*, the seventeenth-century playwright Ben Jonson writes 'if this play do not like, the Devil is in it'. The verb *like* is being used here with our modern sense of 'please', a sense it has since lost. Because of this, the intransitive construction is no longer usable.

What I am suggesting, then, is that the linguistic rules which we extrapolate from actual use are inevitably provisional. Every time the language changes it offers us the chance to interpret them more accurately so that we have a more precise understanding of the way in which language works. Let me try another analogy here. Linguists like to compare language to a game, usually a board game because there are pieces which can be moved around, and usually chess, because it's arguably the most complex of the board games. It's quite a good analogy because in chess each piece moves in a specified way, but its power to do so at any particular moment in the game depends on the place it occupies on the board and its relationship to the other pieces. Similarly with words, their value is constantly changing depending on their freedom to manoeuvre. In the case of *disappear* an obstruction has been removed and its range increased because the state of play has changed; whereas with *like*,

however, an obstruction has been imposed and therefore its range has been limited.

But there is one important difference between chess and language. If you want to learn how to play chess you study the book of rules and these tell you exactly what you can and can't do. This is not, of course, how native speakers of English learn to use their language. We do not expect children to know the rules for forming questions or negating statements. And yet they must know them otherwise they couldn't frame questions or denials properly. They know them, but yet they don't know that they know them. And it's the same with a majority of adults. Try asking someone what the rules are for forming a question in English and you're likely to be met with a blank stare. Understandably so, after all it's not something you need to know unless you are studying linguistics. So there's a paradox at the heart of the subject which it's necessary for anyone starting out to be aware of. In studying linguistics we are trying to articulate what we already know; we are, in a sense, studying ourselves: the rule book exists inside us. Linguistics then is about discovery. Going back to the chess analogy, imagine trying to establish the rules of chess by watching an actual game in progress, rather than by looking at the rules in advance. What you would have to do in this case would be to observe the progress of the play, describe the moves being made, and from that description formulate a set of rules that the players were following. This is exactly the process that Chomsky elaborates for studying linguistics: linguists observe, describe, and explain. This is where linguistics does have something in common with science, namely that its method of enquiry is empirical. It assumes nothing in advance except the possibility of arriving at a principled description, and explanation, of the way in which language operates.

There is an important corollary to this method, however. You would have to watch a lot of chess games before you could be sure that you knew all the rules players were following. And in a sense you could never be completely certain about this. There would always be the possibility of two players making a move you hadn't thought allowable from your observations thus far. You would then have to decide whether they were using a little-known rule you simply hadn't come across, whether they were playing a new variety of the game, or whether they were simply ignorant of the rules. But what you couldn't do is pull out the book of rules and say 'you can't do that because it's not permitted'. You could only appeal to common practice and say 'that's not how everyone else plays it' and wait to be proved wrong. The final authority has to rest with the players, or in the case of language, with its users. 'The meaning of

a word,' said the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'is its use in the language' (Crystal, 1987, p. 102). If this is so, then there are some important points for us, as budding linguists, to take note of. Firstly, we should see ourselves, and indeed others, as linguistic resources; the rules are internalised in us as native speakers of the language. Secondly, we should trust our intuitions about language. If someone tells us that a particular construction which we instinctively feel to be well-formed is not so, we should credit our instincts until we are shown otherwise; they are, after all, a form of knowledge. Thirdly, we should develop a spirit of enquiry towards all language phenomena, taking nothing on trust and being willing to alter or amend our views in the light of fresh information and new knowledge.

What I have principally been urging on you as beginners in linguistics is the necessity of developing the right mental attitude towards the subject, seeing it as an open-ended and participatory pursuit. The structure of English is constantly evolving, bits wither away as new possibilities emerge. Thinking linguistically means viewing language as a dynamic entity, constantly changing, alive on the lips and on the pens of its users. If you begin with the right image of the subject you are much more likely to succeed in mastering it. 'That's all very well,' you may say, 'but the real difficulty I have is understanding the terminology which linguists use: if only they could write more simply.' This is a complaint which everyone makes at some time or other, so you are not alone. The problem is that for many people the terminology is the first thing they encounter when studying linguistics. As a consequence they think the only way to understand the subject is to decode the terms. They consult glossaries and book indexes hoping for enlightenment only to find they don't understand the explanations. This is trying to run before you can walk. There are no short-cuts here. Glossaries can be useful, and I'll recommend one in a moment which I have found particularly good, but there's a sense in which a new term will only have any meaning for you at the point at which you need to use it. I find myself needing one now: I need a term to describe all this new terminology which has evolved around linguistics, and the one which is most useful here is **metalanguage**. Metalanguage is language about language, it consists of words, usually of a technical variety, which enable us to comment on, and describe more accurately, our everyday use of words.

Take for example the term **lexeme**. When I first encountered it I couldn't really see why the writer didn't simply use the term **word**. The glossary I used defined it briefly as a 'dictionary item', but since that was my understanding of 'word' it didn't help much. It wasn't until I realised

that 'word' is itself a very vague term that light began to dawn. If you think about it, any simple word exists in a variety of different forms. The word *dogs*, for example, has a written form and a spoken one – 'dogz' – which are different from each other. None the less we still feel that they're the same word. We would feel odd describing them as two separate items. Not only that, but the word exists in a singular and a plural form – *dog(s)*. Our intuition here would be that there's still an important sense in which we are talking about the same word; there is a change in number but not meaning. However, by now the term 'word' has become hopelessly overworked. It's at this point that 'lexeme' becomes useful. We can think of *dog* as a lexeme, or underlying word, and the different versions of it as word forms. It has a singular and a plural form of which there are written and spoken forms. 'Word' thus becomes a term to describe the word as actual substance and 'lexeme' a term to describe the word as concept, or more accurately, as sign (see Chapter 5: 'Studying Meaning'). This is an important distinction because, of course, a lexeme may be realised in any number of ways including morse code, semaphore, or sign language. But what if we use *dog* in an entirely new way and with a completely different meaning, if, for example, we turn it into a verb *to dog* as in *to dog someone's footsteps*? Well, once again, the lexeme/word distinction helps. Instead of having the same lexeme realised by different words as before, here we have a new lexeme realised by the same word. Words can thus be seen to have an abstract and a physical dimension. This is something which we shall discover to be true of language generally. What I hope we shall see by the end of the book is that grammar is ultimately a mental phenomenon. It's a fundamental part of the Chomskyan tradition of linguistics that what linguists are studying is the human mind. If I have not made this clear enough yet, hang on to it for the time being and we shall return to it later.

What I'm suggesting to you then is, firstly, that terminology is not being used by linguists simply to put obstacles in your path, or to make a simple point seem more complicated than it is. Linguists are no more or less bloody-minded than anyone else. Secondly, only worry about the meaning of a term if not understanding it is preventing you from being able to read on. In other words, don't stop reading at every unfamiliar term you come across and start consulting dictionaries or glossaries. You will only find it frustrating and lose the thread of what you are reading. What you can do, however, is to make a note of all the terms which are unfamiliar to you and then at a later point look them up. One of the best sources of information is *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (1989), by Katie Wales. There are substantial entries for all the

linguistic terms you are likely to come across, sometimes a page long, and it also tells you if there is any difference of opinion about their meaning or use.

And finally, bear in mind that language is both a spoken and a written phenomenon. This may sound supremely obvious but it is still the case that people tend to judge spoken language by its written counterpart, as if one were simply a translation of the other. For a long time writers about English tended to regard the written form as the ideal model for the language. People were encouraged to speak as they wrote. Even today you may sometimes hear complaints about sloppiness of speech because people are not pronouncing the words as they are written. Like me you probably say *India rand Pakistan*, and *the idea rof it*. There is nothing unusual in this, most people do. It is in fact part of a regular process called **liaison**, but there are some who would find this unacceptable. I shall have more to say about this in Chapter 3, but the important thing to bear in mind is that speech is not writing in another form, nor vice versa. There is no punctuation in speech, for example. Speaking and writing are separate but related mediums through which language is expressed. They have their own procedures and rules of behaviour, both of the social and linguistic kind. Indeed modern linguistics has largely arisen from the realisation that speech is not a debased form of writing but a highly structured activity in its own right.

So, having primed yourself to think linguistically about language, the question is 'where to begin?' And as always, the best starting point is your own experience. Before plunging into the mysteries of **phonology** (the sound system) or **syntax** (word order), it's a good idea to reflect on what you use language for and how much you already know about some of the linguistic processes involved. Only in this way can you put some of the ideas you will come across later into a workable and relevant context. I propose, therefore, that we begin by considering language as an experiential phenomenon, in other words, as something we encounter as an intrinsic and essential ingredient of our everyday lives, and from that develop a way of describing the kinds of knowledge which linguists seek to explore. This is the subject of the next chapter.

# Index

This index lists the main items discussed in the book. Page numbers in **bold** identify the chief discussion of an item.

- accent, 14, 36, 53–4, **206–9**, 228  
acceptable/unacceptable, 5  
accommodation, 36, 231;  
    *see also* convergence  
adjectives, 87, 228  
    central vs. peripheral, 195  
    classifiers, 196  
adjunct, **112**, **113**, 183, 228  
adverbs, 87–8, 228  
adverbial, 112–13, 228  
affricates, **72**, 74, 228;  
    *see also* manner of articulation  
agreement, 114, 228  
Aitchison, J., 15, **62**, 166, 215  
alliteration, 53, 228  
allograph, 64, 228  
allomorph, 178, 228  
allophone, **63–5**, 229  
alphabet  
    development of, 27–8  
    limitations of, **55–9**  
    phonemic, **66–9**  
applied linguistics, 204, 229  
approximants, 73, 229;  
    *see also* manner  
    of articulation  
aspect (verbal), 223, 229  
assimilation, 61, 80–1, 229  
assonance, 53, 229  
attribute, 117, 229  
Attridge, D., 37  
Auden, W. H., 29  
Austin, J. L. *see* speech act theory  
auxiliary verbs, 89–90  
Bentham, J., 34  
*Beowulf*, 28  
Berne, E., 23  
Bible, the, Chronicles, 28  
Blake, W., *The Marriage of Heaven  
    and Hell*, 30–1  
breaking, 229  
Burgess, A., 79  
  
Camus, A., *La Peste*, 19–20  
channel, 213–14, 230  
Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, 3  
Chomsky, N., **5**, 8, 10, **16–17**, 19, 85,  
    90, **91–2**, 93, 125, 191, **192**, 204,  
    224, 225  
circumstance (in functional grammar),  
    114  
clause, **107–11**, 230  
code, 213–14, 230  
cohesion, 42, 230  
communicative intention,  
    36, 154, 230  
comparative linguistics, 204, 230  
competence, **12–21**, 94, 230  
    communicative, 18, 20  
    creative, 19–20  
    diagram of, 42, 43  
    grammatical, 16, 18, 20  
complement (in functional grammar),  
    112, 113, 230  
complementiser, 189, 231  
computational linguistics, 204, 231  
constituent, 94, 231  
contrastive principle, 66, 69, 141

- convergence, 36, 54, 231  
 conversion, 177, 231  
 cooperative principle, 36, 154, **157–60**,  
   161–2, 231  
   apparent vs. real violations, 160, 162  
   maxims of: manner, 36, 157, 159;  
     quality, 157, 159–60; quantity,  
     157–8; relation, 157, 158–9;  
     tact, 160  
 Crystal, D., 89, 144  
 cummings, e. e., 38, 88
- decontextualisation, 48, **92–3**, 231  
 deep structure (also D structure),  
   **192–3**, 231  
 determiner, 87, 231  
 diacritic, 56, 57, 232  
 dialect, 36, **205–9**, 232  
   traditional vs. modern, 207  
 digraph, **55**, 57, 232  
 diphthong, 57, 67, **78–9**, 232  
 discourse analysis, 80, 210, 232  
 distinctive features, 73–4,  
   **167–70**, 232  
   nasalisation, 168–70  
   velarisation, 168–9  
 distribution  
   complementary, 170  
   of sounds, 60, 232  
 dominance, 102, 232  
 double negative, 3, 207  
 duality of patterning, 15, 232
- Eliot, T. S., **13**, **35**, 127–8, 151  
 elision, 80, 232  
 ellipsis, 38, **119**, 125, 232  
 euphony, 37, **50**, 232  
 existential quantifier, 202
- feet (in rhythm), 171  
 Firth, J., 27, 137  
 Fish, S., 164  
 focus, **118**, 120, 232  
 force, **131**, 153, 233  
   intonational, 154  
   thematic, 155
- foregrounding, 155  
 Francis, N., 128, 187  
 free variation, 170, 233  
 fricatives, **53**, 72, 74, 233;  
   *see also* manner of  
   articulation  
 function words, 81, 90
- General American, 59, 233  
 generalised quantifier, 202  
 given vs. new, 118–19  
 glides, 73, 74, 223;  
   *see also* manner of articulation  
 Golding, W., *The Inheritors*, 33–4  
 Graddol et al., 63  
 grammar, 223  
   constituent, **94–112**  
   generative, 126, 233  
   in relation to syntax, 85–6  
   phrase structure, 100, 237  
   transformational, 111,  
     **191–3**, 240  
   universal, 86, 241  
 graph, **61**, 64, 233  
 grapheme, **64**, 65, 233  
 Grice, P., 36, 157; *see also* cooperative  
   principle
- Halliday, M., **40**, 41, 45, **114**, 115–18,  
   125, 211, 212  
 historical linguistics, 204, 233  
 Holmes, O. W., 141  
 homonymy, 145  
 homophone, 140, 233  
 Hughes, G., 139
- idealisation, 92–3  
 idiolect, 206  
*Iliad, The*, 28  
 implicature, 156, 233  
 inference, 156, 234  
 International Phonetic Alphabet,  
   46, 227  
 intonation, **170–6**  
   interactive approach, 174–6  
 isogloss, **208**, 209, 234

- Jakobson, R., 445, 123  
 Johnson, S., 2, 24, 141  
 Joyce, J., *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 30
- Keats, J., *Ode to a Nightingale*, 38, 53  
 Kierkegaard, S., 25
- Labov, W., 208  
   observer's paradox, 208
- Lakoff, G., 96  
 Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M., 124, **149–51**
- language  
   concept vs. substance, 93  
   conduit view, 126  
   from lingua, 52  
   governed by rules, 2–9  
   grammatical vs. ungrammatical, 3  
   intractability of, 13  
   like chess, 7–8  
   link with food, 54–5  
   spoken vs. written, 11  
 language functions, **23–44**, 112–24  
   linguistic vs. extra linguistic, 39  
   micro, 23–40  
   macro, 40–4  
 langue, **93–4**, 97, 125  
 lexeme, **9–10**, 154, 178, 234  
 lexicon, 97, 234  
 liaison, 11, **81–2**  
 linguistic variables, 207–8  
 linguistics  
   essays (writing of), **219–26**  
   not a science, 1  
   terminology of, 9–11, 225  
 liquids, 73–4; *see also* manner of articulation  
 Locke, J., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 34  
 logic *see* meaning
- Malinowski, T., 22–3  
 manner of articulation, **72–3**, 235  
 marked/unmarked, **119**, 125, 235
- McCarthy, M., 174–6  
 McLuhan, M., 129  
 meaning  
   and logic, **197–203**  
   and syntax, **194–7**  
   contextual, 153  
   denotative, 134–5  
   four types of, 130  
   inadequacy of term, 130  
   indeterminacy of, 130, 157  
   no perfect fit with language, 162–3  
   sentence vs. utterance, 131  
 medium, 115, 213, 235  
 metalanguage, 9, 235  
 metaphor, 116, 123–4, **148–51**, 235  
   ontological, 151  
   orientational, 150–1  
   structural, 149–50  
 metrics, 171  
 Milton, J., 155  
 minimal pairs, **65–6**, 70–3  
 modification  
   pre- and post-, 100, 107  
   semantics of in noun phrases, **194–7**  
 mood, 121–3  
 morphemes, 176, 235  
   bound vs. free, 177  
 morphology, **176–9**  
   derivational, 176–7  
   inflectional, 178  
 motor difficulty, 14, 235
- nasalisation *see* distinctive features  
 nasals, **72**, 74, 235; *see also* manner of articulation  
 node, 102, 235  
 nomenclaturism, 30, 235  
 non-verbal communication, 129, 235  
 nouns, 87, 235  
   abstract, 34, 133, 228  
   compound, 196  
   concrete, 34, 231  
   mass vs. count, 196–7

- object, **112–13**, 236  
 formal description of, 102  
 Ong, W., 27, 46  
 orthographical fallacy, 57, 236  
 Orwell, G., *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 34  
 over-generalisation, 215, 236
- paradigmatic, 95, 236  
 parole, **93–4**, 97, 125, 236  
 participant roles, **114–18**  
 Perelman, S. J., 23  
 performance, 16, 20, 94, 236  
 phone, **61–5**, 236  
 phoneme, **62–5**, 236  
 consonant, 67, **70–4**  
 vowel, 67, **74–9**
- phonetics vs. phonology, 63  
 phonotactics, 51, 237  
 phrases, **97–107**, 237  
 adjective, 105–7  
 adverb, 103  
 determiner, 188  
 embedding of, 99  
 complementiser, 189  
 inflectional, 187  
 noun, 98–101  
 preposition, 103–5  
 structure of, 99  
 verb, 101–7
- Pinker, S., **33**, 84, 90, **214**, 215  
 Pinter, H., *Last to Go*, 25–6  
 place of articulation, 71–2, 237  
 Plato, 30  
 plosives, **72**, 74, 237;  
*see also* manner of articulation
- pragmatics, 131, **153–62**, 237  
 predicate, 112, 237  
 preposition, 103, 237  
 presupposition, 156–7  
 principle of compositionality, 199  
 process (in functional grammar), 114  
 pronunciation  
 citational form, 69  
 in connected speech, **79–82**  
 rules of, 68, 169–70
- prosody, 171, 237  
 prototype theory, 152, 237  
 psycholinguistics, 204, 237  
 studying, **214–17**
- Quirk, R., 33
- received pronunciation, **14**,  
 54, 238  
 reduction, 81, 238  
 reference, **133**, 238  
 role of, **151–3**  
 register, 79, 138, 238  
 regularisation, 92–3, 238  
 rewrite rules, **109–11**, 181, 238  
 rhyme, 140
- Saussure, F. de, 31, **93–4**, **97**, 125,  
**132–4**, 140  
 schwa, 58, 238  
 Searle, J. *see* speech act theory  
 selection restrictions, 107  
 semantic change, **148–51**  
 amelioration, 148, 229  
 extension, 148, 232  
 limitation, 148, 234  
 metaphorical *see* metaphor  
 pejoration, 148, 236  
 transference, 148, 240  
 semantic features, 134–5, 238  
 semantic fields, 31–2, **138–9**,  
 141, 145  
 semantic space, 141  
 semantics  
 studying, **131–53**  
 truth conditional, 198–203,  
 240
- sense, 132–3, 238  
 associative, **135–40**  
 conceptual, **134–5**  
 sense relations, **140–8**  
 antonymy, 142–4, 229  
 hyponymy, 145–6, 233  
 incompatibility, 146–7, 234  
 polysemy, 144–5, 237

- sentences, **107–11**  
 complex, 108  
 compound, 108  
 difficulty of defining, 107–8  
 functional structure of, 112–13  
 tree structure of, 100–2  
 major/minor, 108
- Shakespeare, W., *Romeo and Juliet*, 29
- signification, 132, 239
- signifier vs. signified, 132–3, 239
- simile, 123, 239
- sociolinguistics, 204, 239  
 studying, **204–9**
- sonority, 51–2, 239; *see also* vowels
- sound  
 compared with sight, 47–8  
 conventional relationship with  
 meaning, 132  
 qualities of, 46–50  
 sound symbolism, 53
- speaking  
 compared with singing, 50–2  
 differentiated from talking, 49
- speech  
 communities, 79  
 compared with writing, 46–7  
 connected, **79–82**  
 physiology of, 52, **69–79**
- speech act theory, 35–6
- speech acts, **160–2**, 239  
 direct, 161  
 illocutionary vs. locutionary,  
 160–1, 235  
 indirect, 162  
 performatives, 161, 236
- standard English, 206, 239
- standardisation, 92–3
- Sterne, L., *Tristram Shandy*, 17–18, 30
- stress patterns, 170–1
- string, 85, 239
- style-shifting, 79, 208, 239
- stylistics, 210, 239  
 studying, **210–14**  
 literary, 210
- subject, 89, **112–13**, 239  
 formal description of, 102  
 grammatical, 114  
 logical, 114  
 vs. predicate structure, 112–13
- subjunctive, 222, 239
- substitution, 42, 239
- suffixation *see* morphology
- surface structure (also S structure),  
**192–3**, 240
- syllables, 37, **50–2**, 240  
 nuclear, 172  
 stressed, 171–2  
 structure of, 50–2
- synaesthesia, 53, 240
- synonymy, 141–2, 240
- syntagmatic, 95, 240
- syntax, 84–5  
 formal approaches, **91–112**  
 functional approaches, **112–24**  
 no manual of, 85  
 reasons for studying, 90–1  
 X bar, **179–91**, 241  
 SPOCA, **112–14**
- tag question, 123, 240
- tense, **221–4**, 240  
 at D level, 224  
 modal use of, 122–3, 222  
 relation to time, 222
- thematic relations, 119–20
- trace theory, 192–3
- transitive/intransitive, **6–7**, 220, 240
- Trudgill, P., 207, 208
- truth  
 synthetic vs. analytic, 153, 240
- under-generalisation, 216, 241
- universal quantifier, 201
- value, 131, 241
- verbal processes, **115–18**  
 behavioural, 117  
 existential, 118

- material, 115–16
- mental, 116
- relational, 116–17
- verbal, 117
- verbicide, 141
- verbs, 241
  - stative/dynamic, 116
  - auxiliary, 89–90, 229
- voicing, 70–1, 241
- vowels, 74–9
  - first speech sounds, 52
  - most sonorous sounds, 51–2
  - produced without restriction, 52;  
*see also* phonemes
- well-formed/ill-formed,  
4–5, 241
- Wilson, D. and Sperber, D., 159
- Wittgenstein, L., 147
- word classes, 86–8,  
196–7, 219
- words, 241
  - as signs, 132
  - core vs. non-core, 137; *see also*  
lexeme
- X bar theory *see* syntax
- yod dropping, 56, 241

# 1 Beginning Linguistics

If you are just starting your studies in linguistics the first piece of advice I have may seem rather odd. It is this: **beware of all books on linguistics**. And that includes the one you are now reading. A healthy scepticism is not a bad thing. Most books on linguistics raise expectations of understanding which they cannot fulfil. This is not entirely their fault, of course. There is an undeniable technical and theoretical base to the subject, and negotiating through this whilst still remaining reasonably coherent is not easy. But in spite of all the technical terminology, linguistics is not a science. It's a pity that the subject doesn't have a different name. We tend to think of disciplines ending in 'ics' – e.g. statistics, mathematics, physics – as having a precise scientific core consisting of unchallengeable facts. Linguistics is not like that. Neither, of course, strictly speaking, are mathematics, statistics, or physics. Indeed, many scientists, nowadays, would question this view of science. Nevertheless, it's important to bear in mind that the subject matter of linguistics, language, is made up. Words do not grow out of the ground, they haven't evolved like matter from the interaction of natural elements. And whilst there is much to suggest that the structures and processes which enable language to develop are inborn, there is still a very important sense in which language is human-made. It is our possession in a way that nothing else is. And the process of making up, or inventing, never stops.

It's as well to remember this when government bodies go on, as they periodically do, about 'bad' English and the importance of maintaining standards. The question we should be asking is 'whose language is it anyway?' Language is one of the few truly democratic forces left to us. It may be used as an instrument of oppression, when one nation colonises or annexes another, but it has an unerring ability to turn on its handler. We have only to look at how international varieties of English are flourishing around the world in former colonies, from the Indian sub-continent to the Caribbean, to see the democratising influences of the language. And even in England, although it is sometimes argued that the combined forces of the media and public schools are producing a uniform

pronunciation, the truth is that conservative speech patterns are themselves subtly changing under the influence of newly emergent accents. Despite institutional pressure and manipulation, language is ultimately a law unto itself. Samuel Johnson, the eighteenth-century writer, and one of the first people to attempt to control linguistic behaviour, reflects soberly in the preface to his *Dictionary of the English Language* on the failure of nations to 'fix' their languages:

With this hope, however, academies have been instituted, to guard the avenues of their languages, to retain fugitives, and repulse intruders; but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain; sounds are too volatile and subtle for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind are equally the undertakings of pride unwilling to measure its desires by its strength. (Johnson, 1958, pp. 233–4)

Despite Johnson's lament about 'the boundless chaos of a living speech' (p. 219), however, language is not chaotic. There are rules governing linguistic behaviour just as there are everything else in life. They may not be the rules which people might wish to impose on us, but they are rules none the less. It is these rules which linguists are concerned with studying. Perhaps an analogy might help here. Imagine that I am attending an important function at my place of work. One of the things I have to do is decide what to wear. If there is a dress code I have to find out what it is in order to avoid embarrassing myself along with everybody else. Let's say it's a suit and tie affair. Now I may of course decide that wearing a suit and tie is rather stuffy and turn up instead in jeans and a tee-shirt. The reaction of people to this will inevitably vary. Some will think it refreshingly informal, whilst others will consider it 'bad form'. But no one will think me undressed. I have clothes on in all the right places even if some people don't like what I am wearing. If, however, I were to arrive with my underpants around my head, my trousers round my neck and my shirt tied round my waist I could be accused of being undressed, as well as running a serious risk of being locked up. There are two sorts of rules here. One is a rule about which part of the body, trousers, for example, are worn on, and the other is about what kind of trousers are worn. The first we could consider a clothing rule, and the second a social rule. The first one is not likely to change; it is doubtful that we will ever get a situation where it is considered normal to wear trousers around one's neck. The second, however, is changing all the time. There are many more occasions now when people dress casually where previously they would have dressed formally.

And it is similarly the case with language. Sometimes you will hear people object that certain expressions or constructions are ‘not English’ or ‘ungrammatical’. Some teachers still like to say this about *ain't* or the use of the double negative, as in *I ain't got no money*. But this is not so. Something is only ungrammatical if it fails to follow a rule in the way it is formed. *I ain't got no money* doesn't follow the same rule in its construction as *I haven't any money* but it's not without one. People who use this construction wouldn't dream of saying *got I have money n't no*, which would be uninterpretable. Someone who produced that would be like the hypothetical person mentioned above, wearing his clothes in all the wrong places. And, as in the clothing example, there are two sorts of rules here: a linguistic sort and a social sort. This is an important distinction to make because it's easy to mix them up. We mustn't confuse linguistic judgements with social ones. Of course, some people will attempt to prove that the double negative is ungrammatical by saying it's illogical, ‘two negatives make a positive’. But no one in the entire history of its use has ever understood it in that way. Up until the end of the Middle Ages it was a regular feature of English, as anyone who has studied Chaucer knows. Here is Chaucer, for example, in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, bemoaning the fact that people can no longer see fairies: ‘But now kan **no** man se **none** elves mo’ (‘but now no one can see no more elves’). The double negative was simply an emphatic way of negating something. What we have done in standard speech over the centuries is to weaken it. Other languages, like French, have resisted this, except in colloquial speech, where, ironically, it is the single negative which is non-standard.

The second piece of advice I wish to give therefore is this: **learn to think linguistically**. This doesn't mean ignoring social rules. They obviously have their place. We might want to argue about what that place is but they are an undeniable fact of life. There are some occupations where using forms like *ain't*, or double negatives, or saying *I done that* instead of *I did that*, could cost you your job. Oddly enough we have become a little more tolerant of certain accents than we have of non-standard grammar. It is quite common nowadays to hear the weather forecast in a regional accent on television, although more prestigious accents are still reserved for the main news. We need to know about social rules, therefore, but it is important to recognise that they are simply conventions. What weight we give to them is entirely relative. In ten or twenty years time, they could be less or more important. There is nothing to stop the Queen giving her Christmas broadcast in jeans, just as there is nothing to stop her saying *me and my husband*. No clothing, or linguistic rule, would be

broken. The publishing world, except in the case of creative writing, sticks rigorously to standard grammar, and one can see why. Using a uniformly accepted style is clearly convenient and runs less risk of offending anyone. In writing this book I have used standard forms although you will find many more contractions, *haven't*, *mustn't*, *isn't*, *it's*, than were acceptable some years ago. And I have several sentences which begin with *and* – like this one. The nature of social rules, and the way in which they operate, is itself a fascinating study and some areas of linguistics, notably sociolinguistics, are more concerned with them than others. But compared with linguistic rules they are only of fractional significance. The rules which enable us to produce either *I haven't any money*, or *I ain't got no money* are far more complex and profound than those which would discriminate against one in favour of the other.

The best place to start an investigation of the differences between social and linguistic judgements about language use is with your own speech habits. Try making a list of things you say which people object to and see if you can categorise them in terms of the nature of the objections and the contexts in which they are made. Some objections might be purely on grounds of politeness, like saying *what?* instead of *pardon?* when something is misheard. Others might concern the use of non-standard forms, as for example, *mine's better than what yours is* or *he done it very nice*. And some might entail a fine point of grammar quite impenetrable to all except those making the objection. Like most people, I can remember as a child being told to say *may I leave the table?* not *can I leave the table?* and failing to see the difference, let alone its importance. Picking others up on minor points of language use is very much a national pastime. People seize with glee on any deviation in spelling, pronunciation, or expression as if it were some failure of character or intelligence. This is partly because in England, at any rate, language use is unfortunately bound up with issues of class. Using 'incorrect' forms is frequently considered an indication of being lower class, and no one wants to be thought that.

If you do this exercise you will find that part of the problem of categorising your 'deviant' speech habits lies in the terms 'correct/incorrect' themselves. Apart from being very vague, they inevitably suggest social approval or disapproval and as such blur any distinction we might want to make between social and linguistic judgements. The whole notion of correctness is too prescriptive to be of any use linguistically. Not surprisingly, therefore, you will rarely find linguists referring to it, except in a social sense. They prefer to talk instead of usages being **well-formed** or **ill-formed**. A particular usage is only ill-formed if it is not generated by

a grammatical rule. Using this criterion, all the examples above are perfectly well-formed even though at first glance they might not appear to be so. Those who regularly produce forms such as *he done it very nice*, for example, are not ignorant of the existence of *did*. They will continue to say *he did do it* not *he done do it* (unless they are speaking Caribbean English). It is simply that a different rule is operating about when to use the past participle (*done*), as opposed to the past tense form (*did*). And as for the use of an adjective instead of an adverb, *nice* rather than *nice*ly, this also occurs sometimes in **Standard English** – *come quick*, not *quickly*, and *open the window wide*, not *widely*. We can find frequent similar uses in Shakespeare: ‘How sweet [not “sweetly”] the moonlight sleeps upon this bank’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, V.i.54).

‘Well-formed’ and ‘ill-formed’ are terms which encapsulate linguistic judgements. We need another set of terms, however, to encapsulate social ones. In 1965 the linguist Noam Chomsky introduced the terms **acceptable/unacceptable**. The notion of ‘acceptability’ offers a much better way of coping with variant forms than that of ‘correctness’. Using it as a criterion we could say that all of the expressions in the last but one paragraph,

*what?*  
*mine’s better than what yours is.*  
*he done it very nice.*  
*can I leave the table?*

are of varying acceptability depending on individual taste and conventions of politeness and context. Any usage which is ill-formed must of necessity be unacceptable whereas the reverse is not the case. The consequence of this is that we can categorise *he done it very nice*, for example, as well-formed, but unacceptable, if used in a BBC news broadcast. Between friends, however, it is both well-formed and acceptable.

The difference between concepts of well-formedness and acceptability on the one hand, and correctness on the other, is that the former are descriptive, rather than prescriptive, in character. That is, they seek to establish rules, whether of the social or linguistic kind, from actual use rather than from the pronouncements of some external authority. But, if that is the case, the question arises ‘in what sense are they rules?’ If they are merely describing what exists, how can that constitute a set of rules? In the case of social rules a better term, as suggested earlier, would probably be ‘conventions’. We could argue that it is a matter of social convention that newscasters avoid non-standard grammar. Conventions operate by a kind of unconscious agreement between the

parties involved. The matter is more complicated, however, with linguistic rules, to which we have said that the terms well/ill-formed apply. What gives a linguistic rule its authority? A linguist might well reply, 'the language', in that a sentence like *got I have money n't no* is linguistically impossible, but we are entitled to probe a little further I think.

To begin with, linguistic rules are not immutable; they do change over time and across dialects. Consider, for example, the sentence *they disappeared him*, and ask yourselves whether it is well- or ill-formed. I am guessing that you would judge it to be ill-formed, that is, not linguistically possible, and many conservative grammars would agree with you. They would do so on the grounds that *disappear* is an intransitive verb, in other words, it can't take an object – you don't disappear something. Verbs are quite frequently classified into transitive and intransitive according to whether they have objects; so the verb *hit* is transitive – something has to be hit. Verbs such as *fall* and *die*, on the other hand, are intransitive, in that they cannot take an object – you don't *fall* or *die* something. According to this grammatical account, *disappear* is a similar kind of verb: *he disappeared* is complete, whereas *he disappeared him* is nonsense. However, it isn't nonsense to an increasingly large number of people. In some parts of the world *to disappear someone* means to make them vanish, usually in highly mysterious circumstances. It's a usage which has been popularised by the media, in particular the American film industry. So, we are faced with a dilemma here. We either pronounce the American usage incorrect and seek to outlaw it, which is the approach a prescriptive grammar might take, or, because we are taking a descriptive approach, we decide it is well-formed but then are faced with having to alter the rules and declare it transitive. And the problem doesn't end there, because there are other verbs which have this slippery habit of crossing over. If we look again at *fall*, for example, it's possible for that to be used transitively in Nigerian English. A Nigerian can say *don't fall me down*, meaning don't cause me to fall over. We should have to say *don't push/knock me over*, but the meaning there is subtly different.

If it is the case that particular communities can change the way in which words behave, is there any real point in talking about linguistic rules? Isn't it just a free for all? The answer to this is 'no', and we must realise why this is so. What we are witnessing in these innovations is the grammar of English growing with use. There's an important point here and one which, as students of linguistics, we have to keep hold of. The popular view of grammar sees it as something mechanical, the learning of which is akin to learning the laws of thermodynamics. But in reality grammar is organic, it resembles a living thing in its ability to produce

fresh matter apparently without end. What we term 'rules' are not so much laws, as linguistic patterns of behaviour governing the operation of English. Every speaker of English contributes to these, for not only do we speak the language, but in a more subtle sense, the language speaks through us. Rules are open to interpretation and negotiation, whereas laws, being immutable, are not.

But you're probably wondering where this leaves the issue of transitive and intransitive verbs. Well, the important thing about innovations is that they make us look more closely at the rules to see how they can be modified in order to take account of the new evidence. And what we begin to discover when we look more closely at verbs is that being transitive or intransitive is an operation potentially open to the great majority, and possibly all, of them. In other words, rather than classify them into transitive and intransitive, it's better to talk of transitive and intransitive *uses*. Those which we class as intransitive are simply the ones for which we have not yet discovered a transitive use. In the case of *disappear* we now have done this. The sinister process by which some governments cause people to disappear without trace has led to the verb developing a transitive sense. And just as some verbs can extend their grammatical range, others may contract theirs. Today, the verb *like* is only used transitively, the sentence *I like* is incomplete – we must like something or someone. In Shakespeare's time, however, it was quite normal for the verb *like* to be used without an object. In his preface to *The Devil is an Ass*, the seventeenth-century playwright Ben Jonson writes 'if this play do not like, the Devil is in it'. The verb *like* is being used here with our modern sense of 'please', a sense it has since lost. Because of this, the intransitive construction is no longer usable.

What I am suggesting, then, is that the linguistic rules which we extrapolate from actual use are inevitably provisional. Every time the language changes it offers us the chance to interpret them more accurately so that we have a more precise understanding of the way in which language works. Let me try another analogy here. Linguists like to compare language to a game, usually a board game because there are pieces which can be moved around, and usually chess, because it's arguably the most complex of the board games. It's quite a good analogy because in chess each piece moves in a specified way, but its power to do so at any particular moment in the game depends on the place it occupies on the board and its relationship to the other pieces. Similarly with words, their value is constantly changing depending on their freedom to manoeuvre. In the case of *disappear* an obstruction has been removed and its range increased because the state of play has changed; whereas with *like*,

however, an obstruction has been imposed and therefore its range has been limited.

But there is one important difference between chess and language. If you want to learn how to play chess you study the book of rules and these tell you exactly what you can and can't do. This is not, of course, how native speakers of English learn to use their language. We do not expect children to know the rules for forming questions or negating statements. And yet they must know them otherwise they couldn't frame questions or denials properly. They know them, but yet they don't know that they know them. And it's the same with a majority of adults. Try asking someone what the rules are for forming a question in English and you're likely to be met with a blank stare. Understandably so, after all it's not something you need to know unless you are studying linguistics. So there's a paradox at the heart of the subject which it's necessary for anyone starting out to be aware of. In studying linguistics we are trying to articulate what we already know; we are, in a sense, studying ourselves: the rule book exists inside us. Linguistics then is about discovery. Going back to the chess analogy, imagine trying to establish the rules of chess by watching an actual game in progress, rather than by looking at the rules in advance. What you would have to do in this case would be to observe the progress of the play, describe the moves being made, and from that description formulate a set of rules that the players were following. This is exactly the process that Chomsky elaborates for studying linguistics: linguists observe, describe, and explain. This is where linguistics does have something in common with science, namely that its method of enquiry is empirical. It assumes nothing in advance except the possibility of arriving at a principled description, and explanation, of the way in which language operates.

There is an important corollary to this method, however. You would have to watch a lot of chess games before you could be sure that you knew all the rules players were following. And in a sense you could never be completely certain about this. There would always be the possibility of two players making a move you hadn't thought allowable from your observations thus far. You would then have to decide whether they were using a little-known rule you simply hadn't come across, whether they were playing a new variety of the game, or whether they were simply ignorant of the rules. But what you couldn't do is pull out the book of rules and say 'you can't do that because it's not permitted'. You could only appeal to common practice and say 'that's not how everyone else plays it' and wait to be proved wrong. The final authority has to rest with the players, or in the case of language, with its users. 'The meaning of

a word,' said the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'is its use in the language' (Crystal, 1987, p. 102). If this is so, then there are some important points for us, as budding linguists, to take note of. Firstly, we should see ourselves, and indeed others, as linguistic resources; the rules are internalised in us as native speakers of the language. Secondly, we should trust our intuitions about language. If someone tells us that a particular construction which we instinctively feel to be well-formed is not so, we should credit our instincts until we are shown otherwise; they are, after all, a form of knowledge. Thirdly, we should develop a spirit of enquiry towards all language phenomena, taking nothing on trust and being willing to alter or amend our views in the light of fresh information and new knowledge.

What I have principally been urging on you as beginners in linguistics is the necessity of developing the right mental attitude towards the subject, seeing it as an open-ended and participatory pursuit. The structure of English is constantly evolving, bits wither away as new possibilities emerge. Thinking linguistically means viewing language as a dynamic entity, constantly changing, alive on the lips and on the pens of its users. If you begin with the right image of the subject you are much more likely to succeed in mastering it. 'That's all very well,' you may say, 'but the real difficulty I have is understanding the terminology which linguists use: if only they could write more simply.' This is a complaint which everyone makes at some time or other, so you are not alone. The problem is that for many people the terminology is the first thing they encounter when studying linguistics. As a consequence they think the only way to understand the subject is to decode the terms. They consult glossaries and book indexes hoping for enlightenment only to find they don't understand the explanations. This is trying to run before you can walk. There are no short-cuts here. Glossaries can be useful, and I'll recommend one in a moment which I have found particularly good, but there's a sense in which a new term will only have any meaning for you at the point at which you need to use it. I find myself needing one now: I need a term to describe all this new terminology which has evolved around linguistics, and the one which is most useful here is **metalanguage**. Metalanguage is language about language, it consists of words, usually of a technical variety, which enable us to comment on, and describe more accurately, our everyday use of words.

Take for example the term **lexeme**. When I first encountered it I couldn't really see why the writer didn't simply use the term **word**. The glossary I used defined it briefly as a 'dictionary item', but since that was my understanding of 'word' it didn't help much. It wasn't until I realised

that 'word' is itself a very vague term that light began to dawn. If you think about it, any simple word exists in a variety of different forms. The word *dogs*, for example, has a written form and a spoken one – 'dogz' – which are different from each other. None the less we still feel that they're the same word. We would feel odd describing them as two separate items. Not only that, but the word exists in a singular and a plural form – *dog(s)*. Our intuition here would be that there's still an important sense in which we are talking about the same word; there is a change in number but not meaning. However, by now the term 'word' has become hopelessly overworked. It's at this point that 'lexeme' becomes useful. We can think of *dog* as a lexeme, or underlying word, and the different versions of it as word forms. It has a singular and a plural form of which there are written and spoken forms. 'Word' thus becomes a term to describe the word as actual substance and 'lexeme' a term to describe the word as concept, or more accurately, as sign (see Chapter 5: 'Studying Meaning'). This is an important distinction because, of course, a lexeme may be realised in any number of ways including morse code, semaphore, or sign language. But what if we use *dog* in an entirely new way and with a completely different meaning, if, for example, we turn it into a verb *to dog* as in *to dog someone's footsteps*? Well, once again, the lexeme/word distinction helps. Instead of having the same lexeme realised by different words as before, here we have a new lexeme realised by the same word. Words can thus be seen to have an abstract and a physical dimension. This is something which we shall discover to be true of language generally. What I hope we shall see by the end of the book is that grammar is ultimately a mental phenomenon. It's a fundamental part of the Chomskyan tradition of linguistics that what linguists are studying is the human mind. If I have not made this clear enough yet, hang on to it for the time being and we shall return to it later.

What I'm suggesting to you then is, firstly, that terminology is not being used by linguists simply to put obstacles in your path, or to make a simple point seem more complicated than it is. Linguists are no more or less bloody-minded than anyone else. Secondly, only worry about the meaning of a term if not understanding it is preventing you from being able to read on. In other words, don't stop reading at every unfamiliar term you come across and start consulting dictionaries or glossaries. You will only find it frustrating and lose the thread of what you are reading. What you can do, however, is to make a note of all the terms which are unfamiliar to you and then at a later point look them up. One of the best sources of information is *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (1989), by Katie Wales. There are substantial entries for all the

linguistic terms you are likely to come across, sometimes a page long, and it also tells you if there is any difference of opinion about their meaning or use.

And finally, bear in mind that language is both a spoken and a written phenomenon. This may sound supremely obvious but it is still the case that people tend to judge spoken language by its written counterpart, as if one were simply a translation of the other. For a long time writers about English tended to regard the written form as the ideal model for the language. People were encouraged to speak as they wrote. Even today you may sometimes hear complaints about sloppiness of speech because people are not pronouncing the words as they are written. Like me you probably say *India rand Pakistan*, and *the idea rof it*. There is nothing unusual in this, most people do. It is in fact part of a regular process called **liaison**, but there are some who would find this unacceptable. I shall have more to say about this in Chapter 3, but the important thing to bear in mind is that speech is not writing in another form, nor vice versa. There is no punctuation in speech, for example. Speaking and writing are separate but related mediums through which language is expressed. They have their own procedures and rules of behaviour, both of the social and linguistic kind. Indeed modern linguistics has largely arisen from the realisation that speech is not a debased form of writing but a highly structured activity in its own right.

So, having primed yourself to think linguistically about language, the question is 'where to begin?' And as always, the best starting point is your own experience. Before plunging into the mysteries of **phonology** (the sound system) or **syntax** (word order), it's a good idea to reflect on what you use language for and how much you already know about some of the linguistic processes involved. Only in this way can you put some of the ideas you will come across later into a workable and relevant context. I propose, therefore, that we begin by considering language as an experiential phenomenon, in other words, as something we encounter as an intrinsic and essential ingredient of our everyday lives, and from that develop a way of describing the kinds of knowledge which linguists seek to explore. This is the subject of the next chapter.

# Index

This index lists the main items discussed in the book. Page numbers in **bold** identify the chief discussion of an item.

- accent, 14, 36, 53–4, **206–9**, 228  
acceptable/unacceptable, 5  
accommodation, 36, 231;  
    *see also* convergence  
adjectives, 87, 228  
    central vs. peripheral, 195  
    classifiers, 196  
adjunct, **112**, **113**, 183, 228  
adverbs, 87–8, 228  
adverbial, 112–13, 228  
affricates, **72**, 74, 228;  
    *see also* manner of articulation  
agreement, 114, 228  
Aitchison, J., 15, **62**, 166, 215  
alliteration, 53, 228  
allograph, 64, 228  
allomorph, 178, 228  
allophone, **63–5**, 229  
alphabet  
    development of, 27–8  
    limitations of, **55–9**  
    phonemic, **66–9**  
applied linguistics, 204, 229  
approximants, 73, 229;  
    *see also* manner  
    of articulation  
aspect (verbal), 223, 229  
assimilation, 61, 80–1, 229  
assonance, 53, 229  
attribute, 117, 229  
Attridge, D., 37  
Auden, W. H., 29  
Austin, J. L. *see* speech act theory  
auxiliary verbs, 89–90  
Bentham, J., 34  
*Beowulf*, 28  
Berne, E., 23  
Bible, the, Chronicles, 28  
Blake, W., *The Marriage of Heaven  
    and Hell*, 30–1  
breaking, 229  
Burgess, A., 79  
  
Camus, A., *La Peste*, 19–20  
channel, 213–14, 230  
Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, 3  
Chomsky, N., **5**, 8, 10, **16–17**, 19, 85,  
    90, **91–2**, 93, 125, 191, **192**, 204,  
    224, 225  
circumstance (in functional grammar),  
    114  
clause, **107–11**, 230  
code, 213–14, 230  
cohesion, 42, 230  
communicative intention,  
    36, 154, 230  
comparative linguistics, 204, 230  
competence, **12–21**, 94, 230  
    communicative, 18, 20  
    creative, 19–20  
    diagram of, 42, 43  
    grammatical, 16, 18, 20  
complement (in functional grammar),  
    112, 113, 230  
complementiser, 189, 231  
computational linguistics, 204, 231  
constituent, 94, 231  
contrastive principle, 66, 69, 141

- convergence, 36, 54, 231  
conversion, 177, 231  
cooperative principle, 36, 154, **157–60**,  
161–2, 231  
    apparent vs. real violations, 160, 162  
    maxims of: manner, 36, 157, 159;  
    quality, 157, 159–60; quantity,  
    157–8; relation, 157, 158–9;  
    tact, 160  
Crystal, D., 89, 144  
cummings, e. e., 38, 88
- decontextualisation, 48, **92–3**, 231  
deep structure (also D structure),  
**192–3**, 231  
determiner, 87, 231  
diacritic, 56, 57, 232  
dialect, 36, **205–9**, 232  
    traditional vs. modern, 207  
digraph, **55**, 57, 232  
diphthong, 57, 67, **78–9**, 232  
discourse analysis, 80, 210, 232  
distinctive features, 73–4,  
**167–70**, 232  
    nasalisation, 168–70  
    velarisation, 168–9  
distribution  
    complementary, 170  
    of sounds, 60, 232  
dominance, 102, 232  
double negative, 3, 207  
duality of patterning, 15, 232
- Eliot, T. S., **13**, **35**, 127–8, 151  
elision, 80, 232  
ellipsis, 38, **119**, 125, 232  
euphony, 37, **50**, 232  
existential quantifier, 202
- feet (in rhythm), 171  
Firth, J., 27, 137  
Fish, S., 164  
focus, **118**, 120, 232  
force, **131**, 153, 233  
    intonational, 154  
    thematic, 155
- foregrounding, 155  
Francis, N., 128, 187  
free variation, 170, 233  
fricatives, **53**, 72, 74, 233;  
    *see also* manner of  
    articulation  
function words, 81, 90
- General American, 59, 233  
generalised quantifier, 202  
given vs. new, 118–19  
glides, 73, 74, 223;  
    *see also* manner of articulation  
Golding, W., *The Inheritors*, 33–4  
Graddol et al., 63  
grammar, 223  
    constituent, **94–112**  
    generative, 126, 233  
    in relation to syntax, 85–6  
    phrase structure, 100, 237  
    transformational, 111,  
    **191–3**, 240  
    universal, 86, 241  
graph, **61**, 64, 233  
grapheme, **64**, 65, 233  
Grice, P., 36, 157; *see also* cooperative  
principle
- Halliday, M., **40**, 41, 45, **114**, 115–18,  
125, 211, 212  
historical linguistics, 204, 233  
Holmes, O. W., 141  
homonymy, 145  
homophone, 140, 233  
Hughes, G., 139
- idealisation, 92–3  
idiolect, 206  
*Iliad, The*, 28  
implicature, 156, 233  
inference, 156, 234  
International Phonetic Alphabet,  
46, 227  
intonation, **170–6**  
    interactive approach, 174–6  
isogloss, **208**, 209, 234

- Jakobson, R., 445, 123  
 Johnson, S., 2, 24, 141  
 Joyce, J., *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 30
- Keats, J., *Ode to a Nightingale*, 38, 53  
 Kierkegaard, S., 25
- Labov, W., 208  
 observer's paradox, 208
- Lakoff, G., 96  
 Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M., 124, **149–51**
- language  
 concept vs. substance, 93  
 conduit view, 126  
 from lingua, 52  
 governed by rules, 2–9  
 grammatical vs. ungrammatical, 3  
 intractability of, 13  
 like chess, 7–8  
 link with food, 54–5  
 spoken vs. written, 11  
 language functions, **23–44**, 112–24  
 linguistic vs. extra linguistic, 39  
 micro, 23–40  
 macro, 40–4  
 langue, **93–4**, 97, 125  
 lexeme, **9–10**, 154, 178, 234  
 lexicon, 97, 234  
 liaison, 11, **81–2**  
 linguistic variables, 207–8  
 linguistics  
 essays (writing of), **219–26**  
 not a science, 1  
 terminology of, 9–11, 225  
 liquids, 73–4; *see also* manner of articulation  
 Locke, J., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 34  
 logic *see* meaning
- Malinowski, T., 22–3  
 manner of articulation, **72–3**, 235  
 marked/unmarked, **119**, 125, 235
- McCarthy, M., 174–6  
 McLuhan, M., 129  
 meaning  
 and logic, **197–203**  
 and syntax, **194–7**  
 contextual, 153  
 denotative, 134–5  
 four types of, 130  
 inadequacy of term, 130  
 indeterminacy of, 130, 157  
 no perfect fit with language, 162–3  
 sentence vs. utterance, 131  
 medium, 115, 213, 235  
 metalanguage, 9, 235  
 metaphor, 116, 123–4, **148–51**, 235  
 ontological, 151  
 orientational, 150–1  
 structural, 149–50  
 metrics, 171  
 Milton, J., 155  
 minimal pairs, **65–6**, 70–3  
 modification  
 pre- and post-, 100, 107  
 semantics of in noun phrases, **194–7**  
 mood, 121–3  
 morphemes, 176, 235  
 bound vs. free, 177  
 morphology, **176–9**  
 derivational, 176–7  
 inflectional, 178  
 motor difficulty, 14, 235
- nasalisation *see* distinctive features  
 nasals, **72**, 74, 235; *see also* manner of articulation  
 node, 102, 235  
 nomenclaturism, 30, 235  
 non-verbal communication, 129, 235  
 nouns, 87, 235  
 abstract, 34, 133, 228  
 compound, 196  
 concrete, 34, 231  
 mass vs. count, 196–7

- object, **112–13**, 236  
 formal description of, 102  
 Ong, W., 27, 46  
 orthographical fallacy, 57, 236  
 Orwell, G., *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 34  
 over-generalisation, 215, 236
- paradigmatic, 95, 236  
 parole, **93–4**, 97, 125, 236  
 participant roles, **114–18**  
 Perelman, S. J., 23  
 performance, 16, 20, 94, 236  
 phone, **61–5**, 236  
 phoneme, **62–5**, 236  
 consonant, 67, **70–4**  
 vowel, 67, **74–9**
- phonetics vs. phonology, 63  
 phonotactics, 51, 237  
 phrases, **97–107**, 237  
 adjective, 105–7  
 adverb, 103  
 determiner, 188  
 embedding of, 99  
 complementiser, 189  
 inflectional, 187  
 noun, 98–101  
 preposition, 103–5  
 structure of, 99  
 verb, 101–7
- Pinker, S., **33**, 84, 90, **214**, 215  
 Pinter, H., *Last to Go*, 25–6  
 place of articulation, 71–2, 237  
 Plato, 30  
 plosives, **72**, 74, 237;  
*see also* manner of articulation
- pragmatics, 131, **153–62**, 237  
 predicate, 112, 237  
 preposition, 103, 237  
 presupposition, 156–7  
 principle of compositionality, 199  
 process (in functional grammar), 114  
 pronunciation  
 citational form, 69  
 in connected speech, **79–82**  
 rules of, 68, 169–70
- prosody, 171, 237  
 prototype theory, 152, 237  
 psycholinguistics, 204, 237  
 studying, **214–17**
- Quirk, R., 33
- received pronunciation, **14**,  
 54, 238  
 reduction, 81, 238  
 reference, **133**, 238  
 role of, **151–3**  
 register, 79, 138, 238  
 regularisation, 92–3, 238  
 rewrite rules, **109–11**, 181, 238  
 rhyme, 140
- Saussure, F. de, 31, **93–4**, **97**, 125,  
**132–4**, 140  
 schwa, 58, 238  
 Searle, J. *see* speech act theory  
 selection restrictions, 107  
 semantic change, **148–51**  
 amelioration, 148, 229  
 extension, 148, 232  
 limitation, 148, 234  
 metaphorical *see* metaphor  
 pejoration, 148, 236  
 transference, 148, 240  
 semantic features, 134–5, 238  
 semantic fields, 31–2, **138–9**,  
 141, 145  
 semantic space, 141  
 semantics  
 studying, **131–53**  
 truth conditional, 198–203,  
 240
- sense, 132–3, 238  
 associative, **135–40**  
 conceptual, **134–5**  
 sense relations, **140–8**  
 antonymy, 142–4, 229  
 hyponymy, 145–6, 233  
 incompatibility, 146–7, 234  
 polysemy, 144–5, 237

- sentences, **107–11**  
 complex, 108  
 compound, 108  
 difficulty of defining, 107–8  
 functional structure of, 112–13  
 tree structure of, 100–2  
 major/minor, 108
- Shakespeare, W., *Romeo and Juliet*, 29
- signification, 132, 239
- signifier vs. signified, 132–3, 239
- simile, 123, 239
- sociolinguistics, 204, 239  
 studying, **204–9**
- sonority, 51–2, 239; *see also* vowels
- sound  
 compared with sight, 47–8  
 conventional relationship with  
 meaning, 132  
 qualities of, 46–50  
 sound symbolism, 53
- speaking  
 compared with singing, 50–2  
 differentiated from talking, 49
- speech  
 communities, 79  
 compared with writing, 46–7  
 connected, **79–82**  
 physiology of, 52, **69–79**
- speech act theory, 35–6
- speech acts, **160–2**, 239  
 direct, 161  
 illocutionary vs. locutionary,  
 160–1, 235  
 indirect, 162  
 performatives, 161, 236
- standard English, 206, 239
- standardisation, 92–3
- Sterne, L., *Tristram Shandy*, 17–18, 30
- stress patterns, 170–1
- string, 85, 239
- style-shifting, 79, 208, 239
- stylistics, 210, 239  
 studying, **210–14**  
 literary, 210
- subject, 89, **112–13**, 239  
 formal description of, 102  
 grammatical, 114  
 logical, 114  
 vs. predicate structure, 112–13
- subjunctive, 222, 239
- substitution, 42, 239
- suffixation *see* morphology
- surface structure (also S structure),  
**192–3**, 240
- syllables, 37, **50–2**, 240  
 nuclear, 172  
 stressed, 171–2  
 structure of, 50–2
- synaesthesia, 53, 240
- synonymy, 141–2, 240
- syntagmatic, 95, 240
- syntax, 84–5  
 formal approaches, **91–112**  
 functional approaches, **112–24**  
 no manual of, 85  
 reasons for studying, 90–1  
 X bar, **179–91**, 241  
 SPOCA, **112–14**
- tag question, 123, 240
- tense, **221–4**, 240  
 at D level, 224  
 modal use of, 122–3, 222  
 relation to time, 222
- thematic relations, 119–20
- trace theory, 192–3
- transitive/intransitive, **6–7**, 220, 240
- Trudgill, P., 207, 208
- truth  
 synthetic vs. analytic, 153, 240
- under-generalisation, 216, 241
- universal quantifier, 201
- value, 131, 241
- verbal processes, **115–18**  
 behavioural, 117  
 existential, 118

- material, 115–16
- mental, 116
- relational, 116–17
- verbal, 117
- verbicide, 141
- verbs, 241
  - stative/dynamic, 116
  - auxiliary, 89–90, 229
- voicing, 70–1, 241
- vowels, 74–9
  - first speech sounds, 52
  - most sonorous sounds, 51–2
  - produced without restriction, 52;  
*see also* phonemes
- well-formed/ill-formed,  
4–5, 241
- Wilson, D. and Sperber, D., 159
- Wittgenstein, L., 147
- word classes, 86–8,  
196–7, 219
- words, 241
  - as signs, 132
  - core vs. non-core, 137; *see also*  
lexeme
- X bar theory *see* syntax
- yod dropping, 56, 241