

# Lecture 4&5: Grammatical Classes/Parts of Speech

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# Parts of Speech

- Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Prepositions, Adverbs (etc.)
- The building blocks of sentences
  - The [<sub>N</sub>sun] shines too brightly in Tucson
  - \* [<sub>V</sub>Will glow] shines too brightly in Tucson
- Also called:  
Syntactic Categories

# Traditional Definitions

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7CxWNY829Y>
- <http://www.youtube.com/user/SchoolHouseRockKids#p/c/9A3416E92CD17A4B/1/qEBy4xEnXfo>

# Classic Definitions of P.O.S

- **Noun:**
  - Person, place, or thing
- **Verb:**
  - Action, occurrence or state of being
- **Adjective:**
  - Modifier that expresses quality, quantity or extent.

# Classic Definitions of P.O.S

- **Adverb:**
  - Modifier that expresses manner, quality, place, time, degree, number, cause, opposition, affirmation or denial
- **Preposition:**
  - Modifier that indicates location or origin.

# Yāska's typology

Ancient Sanskrit grammarian (7<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE)

Divides words or parts of speech (*pada*) into four groups, based on the analysis of the connected text uttered in Rig Vedic hymns

1. *ākhyāta* – verbs --- has *bhava* 'process' as the predominant notion
2. *nāma* – nouns or substantives --- have *sattva* 'thing' as the predominant notion, replaceable by 'that'
3. *upasarga* – pre-verbs or prefixes
4. *nipāta* – particles, invariant words or prepositions

# Problems with the semantic def.

- Not so clear cut:
  - The **assassination** of the president...
  - **Sincerity** is an important quality
  - **Tucson** is where New Yorkers flee for the winter
- Multiple parts of speech?
  - Gabrielle's **father** is an axe-murderer
  - Anteaters **father** attractive offspring
  - ?Wendy's **father** country is Iceland

# Problems with the semantic def.

- Cross-linguistic Problems

Irish Gaelic:

a) Ní **ith**-eann Seán

Neg eat-3sm John

“John doesn’t eat.”

b) Ní **dochtúir**-é Seán

Neg doctor-3sm John

John is not a doctor” (lit. John doctors not)



# Problems with the semantic def.

## Cross-linguistic Problems

Kwamera:

- a)    **lak-imiki**    Kuri    u  
         1s.dislike    dog    this  
         “I don’t like this dog”
- b)    lanpin        **iak-am-óihi**        ihi  
         when        1s-prog-small        still  
         “when I was still small”

# Problems with the semantic def.

## Cross-linguistic Problems

Warlpiri:

- (a)      **wita**-rlu      ka      maliki      wajilipinyi  
         Small-subj aux      dog      chase.present  
         “The small one is chasing the dog”

# Problems with the semantic definition

The yinkish dripner blorked quastofically into the nindin with the pidibs.

- yinkish -adj
- dripner -noun
- blorked -verb
- quastofically -adverb
- nindin -noun
- pidibs -noun

The grammatical class of a word is determined by its **place in the sentence** and by its **morphology**, *not* by its meaning.

# Problems with the semantic definition

What do the underlined words mean?

I think that John is in the kitchen

A picture of Mary

I want very much for you to win the prize

# Distributional Definitions

- We determine the P.O.S of a word by the affixes that are attached to it and by the syntactic context (where in the sentence) it appears in.
- The definition of P.O.S is *distributional*
- Distributional means we look for the context in which the word appears.
- Because they are distributional, POS definitions are *language specific*.

# Two kinds of distribution

- Morphological distribution
  - (affixes --prefixes, suffixes etc.-- which appear on the word)
- Syntactic distribution
  - (position relative to nearby words.)

# P.O.S distributionally (English) – Nouns

- **Derivational Suffixes:**

*-ment, -ness, -ity, -ty, -(t)ion, ation, -ist, -ant, -ery, -ee, -ship, -aire, -acy, -let, -ling, -hood, -ism, -ing*

- **Inflectional Suffixes:**

plural *-s, -es, -en, -ren, -i, -a.*

- **Syntactic Distribution:**

- after determiners such as *the, those, these*, (e.g., *these peanuts*)
- can appear after adjectives (*the big peanut*).
- follow prepositions (*in school*).
- subject of the sentence or as the direct object
- negated by *no*



# P.O.S distributionally (English) -- Verbs

- **Derivational Suffixes:** -ate, and ize/-ise,
- **Inflectional Suffixes:**
  - In the past tense, -ed or -t
  - Present tense, third person singular -s.
  - progressive -ing perfective -en passive -ed and -en
- **Syntactic Distribution:**
  - Follow auxiliaries and modals and the special infinitive marker *to*
  - follow subjects\*
  - can follow adverbs such as *often* and *frequently*.\*
  - can be negated with *not* (as opposed to *no* and *un-*)
  - \*not very reliable

# P.O.S distributionally (English) -- Adjectives

- **Derivational Suffixes:** *-ing, -ive, -able, -al, -ate, -ish, -some, -(i)an, -ful, -less, -ly*
- **Inflectional Suffixes:**
  - comparative form *-er* (or follow *more*).
  - superlative form *-est* (or follow *most*).
  - negated used the prefix *un-*
- **Syntactic Distribution**
  - between determiners and nouns.
  - They also can follow the auxiliary *am/is/are/was/were/be/been/being* (warning: this distribution overlaps with verbs).
  - adjectives can be modified by the adverb *very* (warning: this distribution overlaps with adverbs).

# P.O.S distributionally (English) -- Adverbs

- **Derivational Suffixes:** Many adverbs end in -ly: quickly, frequently, etc.
- **Inflectional Suffixes:**
  - generally don't take any inflectional suffixes.
  - on rare occasions they can be used comparatively and follow the word more: She went more quickly than he did.
- **Syntactic Distribution**
  - Adverbs can't appear between a determiner and a noun or after *is* and its variants.
  - can really appear pretty much anywhere else in the sentence, although typically they either appear at the beginning or end of the clause/sentence.
  - can be modified by the adverb *very*.

# P.O.S distributionally (Michoacan Aztec)

- a) ti-molaluk 'you ran'
- b) ti-maltia 'you bathe'
- c) ti-lakal 'you are a man'
- d) ni-molaluk 'I ran'
- e) ni-walak 'I came'
- f) ni-siwal 'I am a woman'

□ How would you classify the items meaning 'run', 'bathe'? Why? What about 'man', 'woman'?

# Cross-Linguistic Variation in POS

- Each language has its own set of distributional criteria.
- Not all languages have the same sets of parts of speech as English. Some may have less (eg. They may not distinguish verbs from adjectives) or they may have more!

# Open vs. Closed P.O.S



## Open Class POS:

- ➡ allow neologisms (new words)
- ➡ express content
- ➡ N, V, Adj, Adv



## Closed Class POS:

- ➡ don't allow new additions
- ➡ express function
- ➡ Prepositions, conjunctions, modals, auxiliaries, determiners (articles), pronouns, among others.

# Lexical vs Functional

- **Lexical Parts of Speech:** (usually open class, but some exceptions, e.g. pronouns) Express the contentful/referential part of the meaning. (N (including pronouns), V, A,). All that is usually left when you speak telegraphically.
- **Functional Parts of Speech:** (closed class). Expresses the grammatical information in the sentence. The “glue” that holds the sentence together. (P, T, C, D, Neg, Conj)

- When people read prose, they often don't notice that the the definite article has been repeated.
- This is because they don't pay attention to the the fact that the article is a functional category.




# Some closed class POS

- **Prepositions (P):** *to, from, under, over, with, by, at, above, before, after, through, near, on, off, for, in, into, of, during, across, without, since, until*
- **Determiners (D)**
  - a) Articles: *the, a, an*
  - b) Deictic articles: *This, that, these, those, yon*
  - c) Quantifiers: *Every, some, many, most, few, all, each, any, less, fewer, no*
  - d) Numerals: *one, two, three, four, etc.*
  - e) Possessive pronouns: *my, your, his, her, its, our, their.*
  - f) Some wh-question words: *which, whose*

# Some closed class POS

Note spelling!

- 
- **Conjunctions** (Conj): *and, or, nor, neither... nor, either ... or*
  - **Complementizers** (C): *that, for, if, whether*
  - **Tense** (T)
    - Auxiliaries: have/has/had, am/is/are/was/were, do
    - Modals: will, would, shall, should, can, could
    - Non-finite Tense marker: to
  - **Negation** (Neg): not

# Summary: POS

- Building blocks of sentences
- Classic definitions are meaning-based.
  - don't work well: unclear cases, ambiguous POS, cross-linguistic problems, knowledge of POS without knowledge of meaning.
- Linguistic definitions are distributionally based:
  - morphological distribution (affixes)
  - syntactic distribution (nearby words)
- Open vs. Closed classes
- Lexical vs. Functional

# Classwork

## GPS6. NOOTKA

Consider the following data from Nootka (data from Sapir and Swadesh 1939), a language spoken in British Columbia, Canada, and answer the questions that follow the grey textbox.

- a) Mamu:k-ma      qu:ʔas-ʔi.  
working-PRES      man-DEF  
“The man is working.”
- b) Qu:ʔas-ma      mamu:k-ʔi.  
man-PRES      working-DEF  
“The working one is a man.”

(The : mark indicates a long vowel. ʔ is a glottal stop. *PRES* in the second line means “present tense”, *DEF* means “definite determiner” (the).)

*Questions about Nootka:*

- 1) In sentence a, is *Qu:ʔas* functioning as a verb or a noun?
- 2) In sentence a, is *Mamu:k* functioning as a verb or a noun?
- 3) In sentence b, is *Qu:ʔas* a verb or a noun?
- 4) In sentence b, is *Mamu:k* a verb or a noun?
- 5) What criteria did you use to tell what is a noun in Nootka and what is a verb?
- 6) How does this data support the idea that there are no semantic criteria involved in determining the part of speech?

## GPS10. PART OF SPEECH 2

Consider the following selection from *Jabberwocky*, a poem by Lewis Carroll (From *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, 1872):

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought –  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree  
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffing through the tulgey wood,  
And burbled as it came.

For each underlined word, indicate its part of speech (word class), and for Ns, Vs, Adjs, and Advs, explain the *distributional* criteria by which you came up with that classification. If the item is a closed class part of speech, indicate that. Do not try to use a dictionary. Most of these words are nonsense words. You will need to figure out what part of speech they are according to what suffixes and prefixes they take, along with where they appear relative to other words.

## ***CHALLENGE PROBLEM SET 2:***

*Part 1:* By the syntactic distributional criteria given to you in the text, what part of speech should the underlined words in the following examples be?

- a) the leather couch
- b) the water spout

*Part 2:* By contrast, what do the following facts tell us about the partsof speech of *leather* and *water*?

- a) the leather
- b) the water
- c) ?the very leather couch (cf. the very red couch)
- d) ?the very water spout (cf. the very big spout)
- e) \*The more leather couch / \*The leatherer couch  
(cf. the bigger couch)
- f) \*The more water spout
- g) \*The waterest spout

Thanks to Jack Martin for suggesting this problem set.

## Readings:

- Parts I and II of Chapter 3 of *The Word and the World: India's Contribution to the Study of Language*, available on the Internet Archive.
- Pages 35-46 of Carnie (2006)

In the next class we will discuss contents from Chapter 7 of Allerton (2016)