



The Study of Language

George Yule

Cambridge University Press
Cambridge, UK
2020

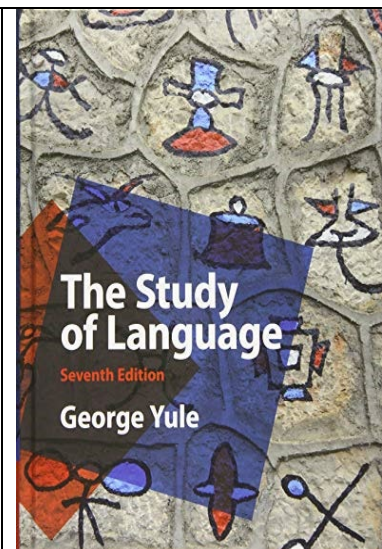
ISBN: 978-1-108-49945-3 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-108-73070-9 (pbk)

Cost: Paperback: \$31.99; Hardcover: \$75.99; eBook: \$19.99

Pages: 386

Reviewed by Dr. Muhammed Fatih Gökmen
Siirt University mehmedfatih1907@gmail.com



The study of linguistics is one of the basal courses that is lectured about and should be surveyed in departments akin to language education, literature, interpretation, and linguistics. To this effect, numerous books have been written heretofore. However, the book named “The Study of Linguistics” is the most used and best sold one for being both extensive and terse let alone being user-friendly. The reference book under review was preliminarily published in 1985 and has gone through six editions until the year of 2020 when its seventh edition was published. This seventh edition deserves for a newer review because the author spliced up-to-date revisions to chapters germane to phonetics and semantics, follow-up activities at the end of each chapter, newer samples from other languages, and a revised Study Guide that can be reached on the book’s website: www.cambridge.org/yule7. To exemplify the organization of the chapters, each chapter is ended with study questions, tasks, discussions, and resources for more reading so as to extend students’ knowledge and practice in linguistics.

In the first chapter, the origins of language were amounted to possible explanations as by the help of a divine entity, identification of natural sounds, musical ability, social transaction between people, and humans’ physical (vocal tract) adaptation to their evolution and lateralized brains.

The secondary chapter leans on the differences between animals and humans which are reposed on one overarching property, that is, humans’ reflectivity over language by using a language. The other subsidiary discerning features of humans’ language are ability to talk about beyond time and place, arbitrariness of the linguistic form and its meaning, transmission of culture, productivity, and duality.

The third chapter briefly deals with the articulation and categorization of individual sounds according to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), that is, 24 consonants, 12

vowels, and 8 diphthongs. Consonants are further classified in terms of voiced and voiceless, place and manner of articulation and vowels according to lengthening of vowels and part and height of the tongue.

On the other side, the fourth chapter clarifies the interactive features of sounds, viz. phono-tactics, when articulated together. The author reveals the meanings and examples for co-articulation effects as assimilation, nasalization, and elision. However, adding a sound into a lexical and consonant cluster should have also been mentioned as one of the co-articulation effects.

The fifth chapter explains word formation as in neologism, say concocting new words and etymology, viz. the origins of words. Word formation processes were expatiated as follows: borrowing words from other languages, combining words, clipping words by reducing its syllables, converting a word class into another one, forming a new word from the initials of a set of words, and lastly forming words from derivational prefixes and suffixes.

In the sixth chapter, morphemes are categorized into two broad classes: free and bound morphemes. While free morphemes are two classes; content or open lexical morphemes as verbs, adjectives, etc. and functional morphemes which are closed word classes as prepositions, pronouns, etc. On the other hand, bound morphemes are derivational affixes which alter the category and meaning of the words and inflectional affixes are the ones that show the grammatical function of a word.

Chapters seven and eight delineate issues related grammar and syntax. Grammar has been studied in three paradigms; traditional, prescriptive, and descriptive grammar. This descriptive analysis insinuates the syntactical structures of a language embodying the relational alignments of the components in a sentence, which was covered in the eighth unit. In this respect, all the infinite structures are based on finite set of syntactic rules. Moreover, the structures can be analysed at two levels; deep structure, that is abstract meaning of a structural pattern, and surface structure, say the tangible form of the structure. The syntactical rules govern lexical, phrase, and sentential components which are utilized to destruct the possible structural ambiguities and clarify the meaning through tree diagrams.

The ninth chapter examines lexis and sentences at the level of semantics. Meaning is divided into two types; referential and associative. Referential is the literal common meaning of a word or sentence. The meaning of words can be scrutinized according to semantic roles as agent, theme, location, source, and goal. Words are also examined in terms of synonymy, antonym, hyponym, superordinate, prototype, homophone, homonym, polysemy, and collocation.

The second type of meaning is associative meaning that was covered in the tenth chapter in the name of pragmatics. Pragmatics studies the meaning that depends on physical and linguistic contexts. Linguistic contexts embody deixis, that is, pronouns as here, us, etc. which hint the hidden meaning of a word or phrase. Other linguistic cues are physical references which speakers or writers use to enable listeners or readers to infer meaning from the mentioned word.

Chapter 11 uncovers discourse which is basically the meaning intended beyond and between the sentences. Discourse can be analysed and interpreted by a number of techniques

as cohesion (sentential link), coherence (rational link), conversation analysis, co-operative principles (quality, quantity, relation, and manner), and background knowledge (schema and script).

Chapter 12 covers the relation between language and brain, which is also called neuro-linguistics (Ahlsen, 2006). As language is the product or function of the brain, left hemisphere of the brain is especially responsible for linguistic abilities. More, the sections in the left hemisphere are also allotted for specific linguistic functions. According to this localization view, Broca's area serves for the productive skills, but Wernicke's area is responsible for comprehensive skills.

The thirteenth chapter handles the stages that children go through in acquiring their first language (Clark & Cassillas, 2015), which is initiated with the help of simplified, recursive, loud, and slower input coming from their caregivers. These stages successively are cooing, babbling, holophrastic (one-word) stage, two-word stage, and telegraphic (multiple-word) stage. After the last stage, children also go through several stages in morphology, syntax, and semantics.

The fourteenth chapter uncovers the basic issues in second/foreign language acquisition/learning. It starts by clarifying the terminological ambiguities between second and foreign language, and acquisition and learning. Afterwards, a number of cognitive, affective, physical, and social factors affecting F/S language acquisition were mentioned. In terms of F/S language learning, numerous theories, methods, and concepts were purported. The fifteenth chapter addresses gestures and sign language. While gestures are utilized while speaking, sign language is an alternative to the spoken language. Gestures embody culture-sensitive emblems, iconics reflecting meaning by gestures, deictics indicating objects nearby, and beats referring to short quick movements for emphasis. Sign language is also divided into two classes; alternate sign language which is used when spoken language is not appropriate to use and primary sign language as British, American, and French Sign language.

Another way of communication is written language dating back to prehistorical carvings into the caves, which was expatiated in 16th unit. Writing generally defined as symbolic representation of language by means of utilizing graphic signs includes pictograms, ideograms, and logograms which represent objects, ideas, and words respectively. Alphabets are the phonemic representations of sounds.

While chapter seventeen addresses linguistics in terms of diachronic change, the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters deal with languages according to their regional and social change, successively. Based on the premise that all languages are subsumed within a family tree and belong to an ancestor language, the place of languages in this tree are determined as a result of comparative reconstruction of sounds and words in a set of cognates. Chapter 18 unearths the synchronic variation in territorial regions. Besides standard English that is broadly spoken in formal settings, languages have accents that are described according to the pronounciational aspects and dialects which embody differentiating features in grammar, lexis, and pronunciation. This chapter also covers such topics as bilingualism, pidgins, and creoles.

Sociolinguistics that was dealt in the 19th unit is based on the idea that the way language is spoken varies from one speech community to another one on the basis of education, occupation, and cultural backdrop. This variety embodies sociolect (social dialect) and idiolect

(individualist dialect) which are determined according to social markers in terms grammar, lexis, and pronunciation.

As a last chapter, Yule construes the reciprocal influence between language and culture, which causes linguistic variations both within a single language and between languages. These varied cultural dynamics can be observed in linguistic categories as linguistic, cognitive, and social categories. The strong and weak forms of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf, 20102) were also briefed.

All in all, Yule rendered an extensive presentation of micro- and macro-linguistics in twenty chapters along with sections as study questions, tasks, and further readings. With this review, I strove to give a recapping review of the book and its units so as to serve a guide for F/S language professionals for utilizing the book in case of need. As a shortcoming, references to Turkish language, which is one of the most commonly spoken language around the globe, were lacking, though a comparison of Turkish language with other languages specifically English would have contributed to the contents of the book. However, the book is quite comprehensive and worth to be used.

References

- Ahlsén, E. (2006). *Introduction to neurolinguistics* (Vol. 134). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Clark, E. V., & Cassillas, M. (2015). First language acquisition. In K. Allan (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of linguistics* (pp. 311-328). Routledge.
- Whorf, B. L. (2012). *Language, thought, and reality: Selected writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. MIT press.

Muhammed Fatih Gökmen is currently working as an assistant professor of English Language Teaching at Siirt University in Turkey. He has ten years of experience as an ELT academician and has taught courses at bachelor degrees. His research interests centre specifically on teaching methodology, teacher education, teaching skills, and global issues in ELT. Email: mehmedfatih1907@gmail.com