

# Glossary

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**ablative case** The case of a noun or pronoun that indicates the source or direction from which an object or motion event begins. See also *case*.

**absolute universal** A generalization that holds true for all languages (although in practice usually restricted to spoken languages) without exception, for example, all (spoken) languages have vowels. See also *non-absolute universal*.

**absolutive case** When in a language a noun or pronoun has the same case when it is subject of an intransitive clause and object of a transitive clause but different from the case when it is subject of a transitive clause, this is called absolutive case. For example, if the word for ‘window’ is in the same case in ‘The boy broke the window’ and ‘The window broke’ the noun ‘window’ is in absolutive case. See also *case, ergative case, intransitive, transitive*.

**accent** A variety of speech differing phonetically or phonologically from other varieties. See also *dialect*.

**accommodation** Adjustments speakers make in their speech to adapt it to features of their interlocutor’s speech.

**accusative case** The case of a noun or pronoun when it is object of a transitive clause, when this is different from its case as a (transitive or intransitive) subject. For example, in English the accusative case of the first person singular pronoun is *me*. See also *case, intransitive, nominative case, transitive*.

**acoustic phonetics** The study of the physical properties of speech sounds.

**acronym** A word formed from the initial letters of a sequence of words, for example, *Qantas* from *Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services*.

**Actor** The grammatical role of a noun phrase the referent of which performs the action or engages in the state designated by the clause. For example, *the farmer* in *the farmer kills the duckling*, and *the farmer is sitting in his favourite chair*. See also *Subject*.

**adjectival phrase (AdjP)** A grammatical or syntactic unit made up of an adjective and possibly an accompanying modifier, that occurs within a clause or noun phrase indicating a quality of some object, for example, *most difficult* in *the most difficult problem*.

**adjective** A part-of-speech consisting of words that typically refer to qualities or properties of things, and occur as modifiers in noun phrases, for example, *bright* in *the bright light*.

**AdjP** adjectival phrase

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**adult language learning** see *second language learning*

**adverb** A part-of-speech consisting of words that normally qualify a verb, indicating the manner in which an action was performed, as in *she ran quickly*; the frequency of the event, as in *she runs often*; or the time or location of an event, as in *she'll come soon* and *she'll come here*.

**adverbial phrase** A grammatical or syntactic unit consisting of an adverb and a modifier, that specifies something about the manner, time, location, frequency of an event, as in *she ran very quickly*.

**affix** A bound morpheme attached to a root or stem, modifying its meaning in some way, and forming a lexical or grammatical word with it, for example, *dis-* and *-ed* in *displaced*. See also *prefix*, *suffix*, *infix*, *root* and *stem*.

**affricate** A sound produced by a stop followed by slow release accompanied by friction noise, for example, the first segment of *chap*, written *ch*, IPA [tʃ].

**African American Vernacular English (AAVE)** The variety of English spoken by African Americans.

**Afroasiatic** A family of languages spoken in northern Africa and the Middle East, including Semitic (e.g. Arabic, Hebrew), Chadic and Cushitic groups.

**agglutinating language** A language like Turkish or Hungarian in which many words are morphologically complex and consist of a root plus one or more affixes the boundaries between which are sharp.

**airstream mechanisms** The means of producing a stream of air for the production of speech sounds, for example, the egressive pulmonic airstream, the stream of air produced by forcing air out of the lungs.

**alienable possession** A grammatical category indicating a type of possession in which the possessor and possession are not linked by intrinsic ties, for example, in *my dog*, *her car*, *your bus*, *my street*. See also *inalienable possession*.

**allative case** The case of a noun or pronoun that indicates the intended goal or direction towards which a motion event is oriented. See also *case*.

**allomorph** One of the alternative phonemic forms of a morpheme, for example, the prefix *in-* in English has allomorphs /ɪn/, /ɪm/ and /ɪŋ/ depending on the first segment of the root to which it is attached, as in *inexplicable*, *implausible* and *incredible* respectively.

**allophone** One of the alternative phonetic realizations of a phoneme, for example, [t] and [t<sup>h</sup>] are allophones of /t/ in English. See also *phoneme*.

**alphabet, alphabetic writing** A system of writing that uses a set of symbols each ideally representing a phonemic segment.

**alternation** The correspondence between two or more allophones of a phoneme or allomorphs or a morpheme, for example, between [t] and [t<sup>h</sup>] in English.

**alveolar** A speech sound produced by bringing the tip or blade of the tongue towards or against the alveolar ridge, for example, [t], [n].

**alveolar ridge** The ridge on the hard palate just behind the upper front teeth.

**alveopalatal** A sound produced with constriction in the region just behind the alveolar ridge, for example, the initial phone [ʃ] of *she*.

**ambiguity, ambiguous** The term used to describe the situation in which a word, phrase or larger unit has multiple meanings. Ambiguity is not the same thing as *vagueness* (see that entry).

**amelioriation** The process by which a word comes to acquire more positive connotations, for example, *fond* in Modern English comes from the past participle of *fonnen* 'to be silly, foolish' in Middle English.

**American Sign Language (ASL)** The sign language used by the deaf community in the USA.

**Amerind** The most contentious of the three groupings (stocks or phyla) of the languages of the Americas proposed by Joseph Greenberg.

**analogical change** A process of change whereby an old form, usually irregular, is replaced by a new form constructed by extension of another pattern, usually the regular one. For example, the English plural *cows* was formed by analogical change, replacing the earlier plural *kine*.

**animacy hierarchy** A scale of pronouns and nouns extending from the first and second persons pronouns (considered as the most animate) to the least animate entities (trees, stones, clouds, etc.). This hierarchy is used in the formulation of certain generalizations about languages, for example, if a language has accusative case-marking of inanimate nouns, it will have accusative case marking of pronouns.

**anomic aphasia** A type of aphasia in which the patient shows inability to find words. See also *aphasia*.

**anticipatory error** A speech error in which the speaker anticipates a subsequent word, morpheme or sound, and puts it earlier in their utterance, for example, *kindler and gentler* for *kinder and gentler*. See also *exchange error*.

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**antonymy** The relation of oppositeness in some component of the meaning of a pair of words, for example, *hot* and *cold* both concern temperature, but are opposite in terms of degree.

**aphasia** A language loss or disorder following brain damage. This be a disorder of either production or comprehension; problems resulting from paralysis to the vocal organs due to brain damage are excluded.

**applied linguistics** The branch of linguistics concerned with practical applications, for example, to second language learning, language maintenance, translation, machine generation of speech and so on.

**approximant** A speech sound involving narrowing at some point in the vocal tract, but insufficient to produce fricative noise.

**arbitrariness** The property of linguistic signs whereby there is no intrinsic or necessary relation between the signifier (form) and signified (meaning).

**arcuate fasciculus** The bundle of neurons connecting Broca's area with Wernicke's area.

**articulatory phonetics** The study of how speech sounds are produced by the vocal apparatus.

**ASL** American Sign Language

**aspirated** A feature of a voiceless stop in which a puff of air follows its release, caused by a brief delay between the release of the stop and the beginning of voicing of a following vowel. See also *unaspirated*, *voice onset time*.

**assimilation** The modification of a sound that makes it more like a nearby sound, for example, when the vowel in *pin* is nasalized due to the following nasal consonant. Assimilation can be progressive (when the sound becomes more like a preceding one) or regressive (when it becomes more like a following one). See also *dissimilation*.

**auditory phonetics** The study of the perception of speech sounds by the ear.

**Auslan** Australian Sign Language

**Australian Sign Language (Auslan)** The sign language used by the deaf community in Australia.

**Austronesian** Name of a large family of related languages spoken mainly on islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans from Madagascar to Easter Island.

**auxiliary** A verb that normally accompanies other verbs, and expresses purely grammatical information, like *was* in *He was going*.

**babbling** An early stage of language acquisition that infants go through from about four to six months of age. Babbling may involve a wide range of speech sounds, though it typically consists of simple syllables (e.g. *ba*, *ma*); over time, the range of sounds tends towards the range in the language being acquired. Deaf children also babble with hand gestures.

**backformation** Process whereby a new word is created by removing what is mistakenly analysed as affix from an old word, for example, *edit* from *editor*.

**back vowel** A vowel produced by moving the body of the tongue towards the back of the mouth, so that its high point towards the back of the mouth, for example, [o], [u].

**basic vocabulary** The set of lexical items in a language expressing meanings of a basic type, that would be expected to be found in all languages, including lexemes for major parts of the body (e.g. 'head', 'hand'), fundamental human and animal categories (e.g. 'boy', 'girl', 'dog'), basic qualities (e.g. 'big', 'little'), common states (e.g. 'sit', 'stand') and events (e.g. 'hit', 'say'), etc.

**bee dance** A set of bodily movements used by some species of honeybee to indicate the location of a nectar source.

**bilabial** A sound made with both lips, for example, [m], [b].

**bilingualism** The ability of a person to speak two or more languages. A range of types of bilingualism are distinguished depending on the time of acquisition of the languages, the person's competence in each, the contexts in which the languages are used and so on.

**bird calls** Brief vocalizations by birds conveying information about the immediate environment, including danger, feeding and flocking.

**bird-song** A complex pattern of vocalizations used for attracting mates and marking territory.

**blade of tongue** The part of the tongue immediately behind the tip.

**blend** A new word created by putting together parts of two existing lexical items, for example, *smog* is a blend of *smoke* and *fog*.

**body of tongue** The main bulk of the tongue.

**borrowing** The incorporation of a word or other item from one language into another, for example, English borrowed the words *government* and *science* from French.

**bottom-up processing** The analysis of linguistic input beginning with the smallest units, the phones, and moving upwards step by step to larger and larger units such as words, phrases and clauses, until the complete utterance is interpreted. See *top-down processing*.

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**bound morpheme** A morpheme that cannot occur as a separate word by itself, but must be attached to another item, for example, the English morphemes *-ly* and *-ed*. See also *affix*, and *free morpheme*.

**brain scanning** Technologies used for studying the human brain in operation, including Electroencephalography (EEG), Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), Positron Emission Tomography (PET).

**broadening** A process of semantic change whereby the meaning of a word becomes wider, for example, *bludger* in Australian English used to mean 'someone living off the earnings of a prostitute', but now means 'scrounger'. See also *narrowing*.

**broad transcription** A transcription of a spoken utterance that indicates the major phonetic features, usually using a limited range of basic symbols. See also *narrow transcription*.

**Broca's aphasia** A language disorder often resulting from damage to Broca's area, which is characterized by problems in speech production and the use of grammatical morphemes.

**Broca's area** An area of the frontal lobe of the left hemisphere of the brain that is believed to play a role in language production. It is named after Paul Broca, a nineteenth century French scientist, who first observed its role in language.

**calque** Also called a loan translation, this is a type of borrowing in which the morphemes making up the word in the source language are translated one by one into the borrowing language, for example, English *power politics* from German *Machtpolitik*.

**caretaker speech** A special form of speech used by adults (especially mothers) and older children when talking to infants, that is characterized by exaggerated articulation and intonation. Also referred to as *baby talk*, *motherese* and *child directed speech*.

**case** A morphological category of nouns and/or pronouns that indicates the grammatical role of a noun phrase in a clause or another noun phrase. For example, *us* is the accusative form of the first person plural pronoun, used when it serves in the object role, as in *they saw us*.

**categorical perception** The perception of speech sounds in terms of phonemic categories, disregarding their physical differences.

**central vowel** A vowel produced with the high point of the tongue in the centre of the mouth on the front-back axis.

**cerebral cortex** The thin layer of neurons forming a outside covering of the two hemispheres.

**chain shift** A series of two or more linked sound changes by which one sound changes to another sound, which in turn changes sound, and so on.

**clause** A syntactic unit that is like a minimal or reduced sentence, typically consisting of one main verb and accompanying noun phrases and other items, for example, *the farmer kills the duckling with an axe*.

**click** A speech sound produced by a velaric airstream mechanism. The back of the tongue makes a closure at the velum, and a second contact is made further forward in the oral cavity. The enclosed space is next enlarged so that the air within it is rarefied; the second closure is then released, and air flows inwards with a clicking noise. English *tut! tut!* is made up of clicks; clicks are part of the regular phonology of Khoisan and nearby Bantu language. See also *velaric airstream mechanism*.

**clipping** The deletion of a part of a word resulting in a new and shorter word, for example, *fax* from *facsimile*.

**clitic** A bound grammatical morpheme that behaves like an independent word, and at best loosely related to the word it is attached to: it does not give rise to a new form of a lexical item (like an inflectional affix), or a new lexical item (like a derivational affix).

**coarticulation** The simultaneous production of a speech sound at two places of articulation (e.g. the labio-velar /w/ of English) or with two manners of articulation (e.g. affricates).

**code-switching** Switching from one language or dialect to another within a single speech interaction or even turn of speech.

**cognate** Words in different languages that come from the same word in an ancestor language, for example, English *man* is cognate with Danish *mand* 'man'.

**coinage** A lexical item that is a pure invention, and not created through use of any of the regular patterns of lexeme formation, for example, *nerd* and *barf*.

**collocation** The relation between individual lexical items that often go together in sequences, for example, *pepper* collocates with *salt* in the common sequence *salt and pepper*.

**comparative method** The method of comparing languages to determine if they have developed from a common ancestor. Lexical and grammatical items are compared in order to discover correspondences relating sounds in the languages; if these are sufficiently numerous and regular, the most reasonable hypothesis is that the languages have a common ancestor.

**complementary distribution** When two speech sounds do not share any environments of occurrence they are said to be in complementary distribution, for example, in English [p] and [p<sup>h</sup>] are in complementary distribution: [p] occurs following [s], [p<sup>h</sup>] at the beginning of a word, and there is nowhere where both are normally found.

**complex sentence** A sentence composed of more than one clause, for example, *When danger threatens your children, call the police*.

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**componential analysis** A semantic theory that analyses the semantics of lexical items into a small set of meaning components or 'semantic features' that take + and – values. For example, *boy* would have the features [+male] and [–adult], whereas *girl* would be [–male] and [–adult].

**compounding** A process of forming new lexical items by putting together a pair of words, as in *wash basin*, and *handbook*.

**conditioning factor** A circumstance that, when met, leads to the choice of one allophone or allomorph, for example, a conditioning factor for the unaspirated allophone [p] is that it follows a word initial [s], as in [spm].

**conduction aphasia** A type of aphasia that may result from damage to the arcuate fasciculus. Patients often experience difficulties in repeating words spoken to them, and in monitoring their own speech.

**conjunction** A grammatical word whose primary function is to connect linguistic units, for example, *and*, *but* and *or*.

**connotation** A term used in semantics in reference to emotional associations of a word or other linguistic unit.

**consonant** A speech sound produced with a narrowing or closure at some point in the vocal tract.

**constituent analysis** Hierarchical analysis of a syntactic construction into units. Two main types are Immediate Constituent Analysis and String Constituent Analysis.

**contextual meaning** Part of the meaning of an utterance that is not encoded by the signs making it up, but which is engendered by the context in which the utterance is used.

**contour tone system** A tone system in which the direction of tonal movement is significant; Mandarin Chinese has a contour tone system, with high level, high rising, low falling rising, and high falling.

**contralateral control** This refers to the control of one side (left/right) of the body by the opposite hemisphere (right/left) of the brain. Many bodily sensations are also experienced contralaterally.

**conventionality** The idea that the form and meaning of a sign are linked by agreed convention rather than by necessity.

**conversation analysis** The field of linguistics that studies the structure of conversations, for example, the way turn-taking is organized.

**cooing** A very early stage in language acquisition in which the infant produces cooing-sounds, typically made up of syllables consisting of velar consonants and back vowels.



**cooperative principle** The principle formulated by H.P. Grice that speech interactants assume that they are each behaving rationally and cooperatively; this underlies the way people understand the intended meaning of an utterance.

**corpus callosum** The bundle of nerve fibres connecting the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

**creole** A language that began as a pidgin but eventually became the first language of a speech community. In the process of creolising, the earlier pidgin becomes more complex, and shares the major properties of other human languages. See also *pidgin* and *mixed language*.

**critical period hypothesis** The idea that there is a biologically determined window of time, between infancy and puberty, for the acquisition of a first language. Outside of this period it is believed that it is impossible to achieve native fluency in a language.

**dative case** The case of a noun or pronoun when it is an indirect object or recipient as in *she gave the book to me*. Dative case usually covers a range of meanings similar to the prepositions *to* and *for* in English. See also *case*.

**deaf sign language** A language used by deaf people in which the lexical and grammatical units are represented by manual gestures and other body movements.

**deictic, deixis** A means of establishing the reference of linguistic elements by situating them relative to speaker, hearer, and time and place of the speech interaction. Tense is deictic because it locates an event with respect to the time of speaking.

**dental phone** A consonant with the teeth as the place of articulation.

**derivational morpheme** A bound morpheme added to a root or stem to form a new stem, for example, the suffix *-er* in English. See also *inflectional morpheme*.

**descriptive linguistics** The sort of linguistics that aims to describe the facts of a language as it is actually spoken as distinct from how speakers believe it ought to be spoken.

**dialect** A variety of language characterized by a particular set of words, grammatical structures, and phonetic or phonological characteristics that is associated with a particular geographical region, as in the New Zealand dialect of English. The term dialect is sometimes used in reference to varieties associated with age, social class, gender, religion, etc.; thus we could talk of a middle class dialect. See also *accent*.

**dichotic listening test** An experimental method used in neurolinguistics in which subjects hear different sounds in the left and right ears.

**diglossia** A situation in which two very different varieties of a language are used throughout a speech community, that differ in terms of formality; thus one, the high variety, is associated