

UNIT 5

Language Basic Concepts, Theories, Pedagogy, Language in Use SAMPLE NOTES

BASICS OF ELT & LINGUISTICS

ELT stands for English Language Teaching. The purpose of ELT is to use English as a second language, foreign language or international language.

The connection between ELT and the study of Linguistics is that this is the field that scientifically breaks down a language system into its basic and most important components. Therefore, understanding a language from the "inside out" makes it much more likely that the instructor will be able to teach extensively, comprehensively and accurately.

Moreover, a strong knowledge of linguistics helps the EL teacher to explain the language better to the students, since there is knowledge about its word formation (morphology), word meaning (semantics), the structure of words within sentences (syntax), and of the proper pronunciation and intonation of words in the target language.

Titone emphasized that there have been two basic positions held in English language teaching: **a) Form-focused** teaching which emphasizes the teaching of the rules of grammar, structures, the development of vocabulary and the sounds of language; **b) Meaning-focused** teaching which emphasizes language use, communication or fluency and appropriacy of expression in different situations.

According to Boey, the behaviourist school, the process of language teaching profession today has become more and more complex and it has three main strands: **1) Theoretical contributions** from linguistics, psychology and social theory. **2) Methodology and teaching techniques**. **3) Aids and equipment**

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. There are broadly **three aspects** to the study, which include **language form, language meaning, and language in context.**

PHONOLOGY AND MORPHOLOGY

Morphology is understood to involve generalizations about form and meaning that relate words to one another within a language, and **phonology** is understood to involve generalizations about the sound patterns in that language.

The period of **Middle English** marks the transition between English as a typologically '**Old Germanic**' language and **English of the type now familiar to us**. These four centuries are particularly rich in radical and system-transforming changes in both phonology and morphology. After the Norman Conquest anyone who wrote in English normally wrote in his own regional dialect, according to more or less well-defined local conventions, some of them are great phonological informativeness. This lack of standardisation also encouraged orthographic experimentation, and we have some very useful 'eccentric' texts like the Ormulum. Roger Lass whose authors have one degree or another 'invented' their spelling systems, and in the process told us a great deal about aspects of linguistic structure that tend to be invisible in less fluid traditions. The immediately following centuries (sixteenth to seventeenth) saw the rise of the first native descriptive phonetic tradition, from the midsixteenth century we have explicit and often quite reliable phonetic descriptions.

In Germanic linguistics Old vs Middle is in essence a typological distinction. **A typical Old Germanic language** (Gothic, Old English) will have: **(a)** a rich inflectional morphology, especially nominal case marking and person/number/mood inflection on the verb; **(b)** a relatively full system of unstressed vowels, with little or no merger of distinctive qualities; and **(c)** relative freedom in the distribution of vowel length. From this perspective, **a Middle Germanic language** has **(a)** to lose its highly differentiated morphology; **(b)** to reduce its unstressed vowel system, often with neutralisation to one or two qualities; and **(c)** to reorganise vowel length, making it increasingly sensitive to

syllable structure and phonetic context. These criteria are inherently relative, frequently obscured in modern languages by subsequent alterations.

IMPORTANT TERMS IN LINGUISTICS

Prescriptive grammar: The grammar that we are taught in school. Typically a prescriptive grammar is about the "shoulds and shouldn'ts" in a language. Prescriptive grammars typically reflect the grammar of a written standard and are concerned with making determinations about the "correct" choice when there are potential variants. The prescriptive grammar of English says that only one of those is "correct" even though all speakers of English have the option.

Morphology: The study of words, how they are formed, and their relationship to other words in the same language. It analyzes the structure of words and parts of words, such as stems, root words, prefixes, and suffixes.

Morpheme: A meaningful morphological unit of a language **that cannot be further divided** (e.g. in, come, -ing, forming incoming) / **the smallest meaningful unit.**

Inflection: The morphology that governs **grammatical relationships between words** (e.g. the 3rd person, present verb in English [-s] tells us something about the relationship between the noun and the verb).

Derivation: The morphology that governs **how new meanings are created** (e.g. if I attach the prefix 'un-' to a verb like 'tie', I create a new meaning--namely the opposite of the original word).

Syntax: The study of the construction of sentences in a language. This includes the linear **order (e.g. Subject Verb Object vs. Subject Object Verb)** as well as **the relationships between the parts of the sentence.**

Semantics: The study of meaning (e.g. The word "bank." Depending on the context, it can have different meanings: "I deposited my money at the bank." In this context, "bank" refers to a financial institution. "I sat by the riverbank." In this context, "bank" refers to the side of a river).

Pragmatics: The study of meaning **in context** (e.g. "the door is open" can have different interpretations depending on the context).

Diachronic: The study of language across time (e.g. the history of the changes in a language). It is concerned with **the way in which something, especially language, has developed and evolved through time.**

Synchronic: The study of language **at a specific point in time.**

Pidgin: A language that often has a simplified grammar and lexicon and that is used as a kind of **lingua franca (GLOBAL/INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE)** among speakers who don't share a native language. Pidgins are typically **not anyone's native language.**

Creole: Creole languages are not just makeshift communication systems; they are **fully developed** languages with their own grammar, vocabulary, and syntax.

Diphthong: If the tongue moves significantly during the production of a vowel phone, the result is a diphthong. A diphthong sounds like a rapid, blended sequence of **two separate vowels**. An example in English is the vowel sound in the word kite, which is like a rapid combination of a kind of 'a sound' and a kind of 'i sound'. In the IPA a diphthong is represented by **two vowel symbols**. It is important to note that **the two symbols represent a SINGLE phone.**

Ellipsis: A technical term for **leaving out words in sentences**. For example, in "Brian ate the ice-cream and Judy the peaches", there is ellipsis, since the word ate **is omitted** after Judy.

Lexeme: The four words eat, eats, eating and eaten are morphological variants of the word eat. The past tense ate is not so obviously morphologically connected to eat, but nevertheless has the same **underlying meaning**. Thus we may say that the five words eat, eats, eating, eaten and ate form a single lexeme, i.e. a single 'meaning entity'. A dictionary would be expected to contain only one definition for all five words. A lexeme is thus equivalent to what is often called a **'head word'** in a dictionary.

Lexicon: Often used as a technical term for the list of words and their types which is used with a grammar (Dictionary).

Branches of Linguistics

Psycholinguistics

Psycholinguistics, one of the branches of linguistics, as a branch of cognitive science, investigates **how we acquire language, how we produce language**. In other words, Psycholinguistics examines **language acquisition, language production and language comprehension**. It is the study of **mental aspects of language and speech**. It looks critically into **how we represent and process language in the brain**.

Alan Garnham, in his book ***Psycholinguistics: Central Topics***, defines Psycholinguistics as “the study of the mental mechanisms that make it possible for people to use language. It is a scientific discipline whose goal is a coherent theory of the way in which language is produced and understood.” Psycholinguistics is a branch of both linguistics and psychology.

The American psychologist, Jacob Robert Kantor introduced the term ‘**Psycholinguistics**’ in his book, *An Objective Psychology of Grammar*, published in 1936.

The two key questions that Psycholinguistics seeks to answer are:

- What knowledge of language do we need to use language?
- What are the cognitive processes (perception, memory, and thinking) involved in the ordinary use of language?