



Tikrit University

College of Education

English Department

Class: 3rd

Linguistics

Lecture Title: Language

Submitted by:

Asst. Lecturer Muna E. Abdullah

What is Language?

In linguistics, language is a system of communication that is unique to human beings. It is a complex and structured system of signs, symbols, and rules that allows individuals to express and convey meaning. Linguistics, as a field of study, examines language comprehensively, including its structure, usage, acquisition, and variation. Linguists investigate various aspects of language, such as phonetics (sounds), phonology (sound patterns), morphology (word formation), syntax (sentence structure), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (language use in context).

Language is characterized by its productivity and creativity. It allows speakers to produce and comprehend an infinite number of novel and meaningful utterances based on a finite set of linguistic elements and rules. This creative aspect of language is often referred to as "linguistic competence." Language is also a social and cultural phenomenon. It is used by individuals within a community to communicate and interact with one another. Languages vary across different communities and cultures, exhibiting unique linguistic features, vocabulary, and grammar. Linguists analyze and describe language at various levels, from the sounds and words used in a particular language to the larger structures and patterns that govern sentence formation and interpretation. They also investigate language acquisition, bilingualism, language change over time, and the role of language in society. Overall, in linguistics, language is examined as a complex and dynamic system that plays a fundamental role in human communication, thought, and culture.

The Functional Side

In addition to its structural aspects, linguistics also investigates the functional side of language. Functional linguistics focuses on how language is used for communication and the role it plays in social interaction. Functional linguists study language in its context of use and emphasize the communicative functions and purposes of linguistic elements. They examine how language serves various functions, such as expressing thoughts and ideas, conveying emotions, negotiating meaning, and establishing social relationships. Functional linguistics explores the ways in which language is shaped by and shapes social and cultural contexts. It considers the social factors that influence language variation, such as gender, age, social status, and cultural norms. This perspective recognizes that language is not solely a system of abstract rules but is deeply embedded in social practices and carries social meaning.

Functional linguistics also examines discourse and pragmatics, which deal with how language is organized and interpreted in specific contexts. Discourse analysis investigates the structure and coherence of extended stretches of language, such as conversations, narratives, and written texts. Pragmatics explores how language users employ context, shared knowledge, and implicatures to convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words and sentences. Furthermore, functional linguistics investigates language as a tool for accomplishing specific communicative tasks. This perspective emphasizes the functional motivations behind linguistic choices, including the ways in which language users adapt their speech to achieve their communicative goals.

Overall, the functional side of linguistics focuses on understanding how language functions as a means of communication, how it is shaped by social and cultural factors, and how it is used to achieve specific communicative purposes in real-world contexts. It complements the structural analysis of language by providing insights into the dynamic and interactive nature of linguistic communication.

Some points regarding the functional side of language in linguistics:

1. Context of Use: Functional linguistics examines language in its context of use, considering how language is employed in communicative situations and influenced by social, cultural, and situational factors.

2. Communicative Functions: Functional linguistics focuses on the communicative functions and purposes of language, exploring how language is used to express thoughts, convey emotions, negotiate meaning, and establish social relationships.

3. Social and Cultural Factors: Functional linguistics recognizes that language is shaped by social and cultural contexts, including factors like gender, age, social status, and cultural norms. It investigates how these factors influence language variation and use.

4. Discourse Analysis: Functional linguistics includes discourse analysis, which examines the structure and coherence of extended stretches of language, such as conversations, narratives, and written texts. It investigates how language functions within larger units of communication.

5. Pragmatics: Functional linguistics explores pragmatics, which deals with how language is used in specific contexts to convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words and sentences. It considers the roles of context, shared knowledge, and implicatures in communication.

6. Language as a Tool: Functional linguistics views language as a tool for achieving specific communicative tasks. It examines how language users adapt their speech to accomplish their communicative goals effectively.

7. Dynamic and Interactive Nature: The functional side of linguistics emphasizes the dynamic and interactive nature of linguistic communication, recognizing that language is not just a system of abstract rules but is deeply embedded in social practices and carries social meaning.

These points highlight the focus of functional linguistics on language in its context of use, communicative functions, social and cultural factors, discourse analysis, pragmatics, the instrumental nature of language, and the dynamic aspects of linguistic communication.