

R. L. Trask: Language: The Basics

Chapter One: The uniqueness of human language (pp 1-21)

1. What are the design features
2. How are speech sounds produced
3. What does phonetics study
4. What are phonemes
5. Does English spelling truthfully represent the English phonemes
6. What does duality of patterning consist in
7. What is the advantage of duality of patterning
8. Why is this duality so important in linguistic studies
9. Is it possible to say exactly how many phonemes are there in English
10. Do all languages have the same number of phonemes
11. What does displacement involve
12. What does open-endedness of language consist in
13. What does stimulus.freedom mean
14. What does arbitrariness refer to
15. What is the opposite feature to arbitrariness
16. What is onomatopoeia
17. Is onomatopoeia and iconicity the same thing
18. If onomatopoeia means representation of some noise by speech sounds, how come that the same phenomenon is expressed as bang, pum, pan, peng, dzast in different languages
19. What does phonaesthesia mean
21. What expression describes both onomatopoeia and phonaesthesia
22. What is more characteristic of human language: sound symbolism or arbitrariness
23. What is speech
24. What is the vocal tract
25. How old is writing
26. How does sign language work
27. In what sense is speech the primary medium
28. Study Figure 1.3 on page 12
29. What do the Latin expressions *Homo sapiens* and *Homo loquens* mean
30. In what sense is sign language a language

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Chapter Two: The grammatical backbone (21-35)

1. What is the most important characteristic of language
2. What is grammar
3. Are there languages with no, little and a lot of grammar
4. What do linguists do
5. What is grammar often confused with
6. What does the asterisk (\*) symbolise
7. What is the importance word order in language
8. Why does English have a stricter word order than Basque
9. Explain the grammatical rule in (2.13) on page 24
10. Why do we need technical language to talk about grammar
11. Are *knowing how to speak a language* and *being able to state the rules of grammar* the same things
12. What is the difference between *giving an opinion about a language phenomena* and *stating a rule of grammar*
13. What construction does (2.16) illustrate
14. Which part of (2.21) is the relative clause
15. What is the **grammatical** difference between *who arrive in a car* (2.21) and *that John has stolen a car* (2.25)
16. Find the complex noun phrases in 2.21 and 2.25
17. What are lexical categories
18. What is meant by distributional properties
19. What is a sentence frame
20. What do inflectional properties consist in
21. What is meant by derivational properties

22. What is the **meaning** difference between (2.29) and (2.31) on page 30
23. How many number categories can be found in languages
24. What is gender
25. Is there a natural connection between the grammatical gender system and (biological) sex
26. Where is Swahili spoken
27. What language is Navaho
28. What type of gender system does English have

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Chapter Three: Language and meaning (pp 35-51)

1. What is semantics
2. What does the meaning of a sentence depend on
3. What is Frege's principle about
4. What does lexical semantics study
5. What is a mammal
6. What problem does the definition of 'dog' show
7. What does the stereotype theory state
8. What is synonymy
9. What is antonymy
10. What types of antonymy are there
11. Explain what a hyponym is
12. What does generic term mean
13. What is the difference between hyponym and generic term
14. What phenomenon does mother-in-law language refer to
15. What is tense
16. How is tense marked in English
17. How many tenses does English have
18. What does the Principle of Effability state
19. What is the difficulty of translation
20. What does the linguistic relativity-hypothesis state
21. What are Whorf's examples (pp 46-47)
22. What is the lesson from the Berlin-Kay experiment
23. What does the snow-example show

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Chapter Four: Variation in Language (pp 51-65)

1. What is meant by geographical variation of a language
2. What is accent
3. What is the difference between dialect and accent
4. Study the 8 accent examples on pp 52-53
5. What is the connection between accents and spelling
6. What variation types are recognised in languages
7. What does dialectology study
8. What is an isogloss
9. Study Figures 4.1 and 4.2 on pp 56 and 57
10. What does sociolinguistics study
11. What does the quantitative(/statistical) approach consist in? Study points 1-5 on page 58
12. What is a linguistic variable
13. What is a competing linguistic form
14. What is the lesson from quantitative sociolinguistic studies/experiments
15. What is the social significance of variables
16. Do men and women speak the same language
17. What shows that there is built-in sexism in English
18. What is bilingualism
19. What is a minority language
20. What is immigrant language

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Chapter Five: Change in language (pp 67- 83)

1. Can a present day speaker of English understand Old English
2. What are the differences between OE and Modern English
3. How did OE begin its existence
4. How did English lose its endings

5. Why is 1066 an important date in the life of the English language
6. What happened to OE words
7. Where do new words come from
8. Study the Latin loanwords on page 70
9. In what way did Celtic influence (Old) English
10. How did the adoption of Christianity influence English
11. What vocabulary items did English borrow from Scandinavian/Old Norse
12. Why did English adopt so many (Norman) French words
13. What happened after 1400 to French loanwords
14. How did the British expansion and international trade enrich English vocabulary
15. Why do language adopt a word for a thing/concept which they have already a word for
16. What is interesting about *nom de plume* and *footing*
17. What speech sounds did the letter <h> represent
18. What happened to the speech sound represented by <h>
19. What does h-dropping consist in
20. What does vernacular speaker mean
21. Study points 1-4 on pp 77-78 about how language change typically proceeds
22. What do linguists call drift
23. What is the standard explanation for different Germanic languages
24. What is Ingvaemonic
25. What happened to the Angles and Saxons
26. What did the continental Ingvaemonic change into
27. Study Fig. 5.2 on page 80
28. Study Fig. 5.3 on page 82
29. What is Proto-Germanic
30. Which languages belong to the Indo-European family
31. What do the letters PIE represent
32. What does the Nostratic hypothesis involve

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Chapter Six: Language in use (pp 85 - 104)

1. What is discourse
2. How does the author define conversation
3. What is meant by imperfection in this chapter
4. What is the general rule in English to use the definite article
5. What is turn-taking
6. What is the difference between men's and women's turn-taking
7. "Utterances can express meanings which are not really there..." (page 89). Explain
8. What is context
9. What is the first step in explaining utterances
10. What is the next step
11. What does pragmatics study
12. What are Grice's maxims about
13. How do these maxims work
14. What does flouting the maxims involve
15. Do Grice's maxims hold in all languages
16. What is a synecdoche
17. How does metonymy work
18. What is the definition of metaphor
19. What is meant by a cognitive metaphor
20. What are dead metaphors
21. Who invented writing
22. What characteristic does a true writing system have
23. Can thought be directly recorded
24. Can writing change as fast as language
25. What does Latin exemplify
26. What does anachronism mean
27. What is language for
28. What does critical discourse analysis deal with

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Chapter Nine: Attitudes to language (pp 132 - 148)

1. What is split infinitive

2. What is wrong with the author's non linguistic examples (car mechanic, real-estate agent, shop assistant)
3. What does prescriptivism consist in
4. What does descriptivism do
5. What are the author's examples of prescriptive rules
6. Where do the prepositions belong in *Daddy, what did you bring that book I didn't want to be read to out of up for?*
7. What is a sentence adverb
8. What grammatical constructions do the examples in (9.7-9.9) illustrate
9. When did the progressive passive come into being
10. What gives rise to prescriptivism and the opinion that contemporary language is corrupt
11. What does borrowing mean in linguistics
12. What is purism
13. What do purists think of borrowings/loan words
14. What happens to English loan words in French
15. What is a calque
16. What are the author's examples for calque
17. What does vernacular mean
18. What is standard English
19. Can language be logical
20. What does generalise mean in grammar
21. Which dialect was the basis for standard English
22. What is the advantage of a standard variety
23. What does bidialectal mean
24. What does Abstand mean in linguistics
25. What does language planning consist in