

Topic 7: Language

- Describe the hierarchical structure of language with regards to: Phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases and sentences.'

A sentence is at the top of the hierarchy, and is defined as a coherent sequence of words that express meaning. Next are words, which are the smallest free forms in a language. Morphemes are third, and are the smallest unit of sound that can carry meaning in a language. Lastly are phonemes, which are the smallest units of sound that can distinguish words in a language.

- Define a phoneme and explain the role of the phoneme in language.

A phoneme is a sound that signals differences in meaning (e.g. 'cats' contains two morphemes. Cat is one, and '-s' is another, as the '-s' indicates the meaning of there being plural cats).

- Define a morpheme and understand the role of the morpheme with regard to the generativity of language.

Morphemes are the smallest units of meaning. There are two types of morphemes: free, and bound. Free morphemes are able to stand alone to provide meaning (e.g., walk), whereas bound morphemes require a free morpheme to provide meaning (e.g. '-ing' in 'walking'). There are inflectional morphemes (such as the 'walking' example, whereby grammatical meaning is inferred. Inflectional morphemes may include information pertaining to the number of objects, possession, verb tenses, or comparatives), and derivational morphemes, whereby prefixes or suffixes are added to words (e.g. with the word 'do', we can undo, redo, or be the doer, or something can be doable).

- Define a syntax.

Syntax is the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.

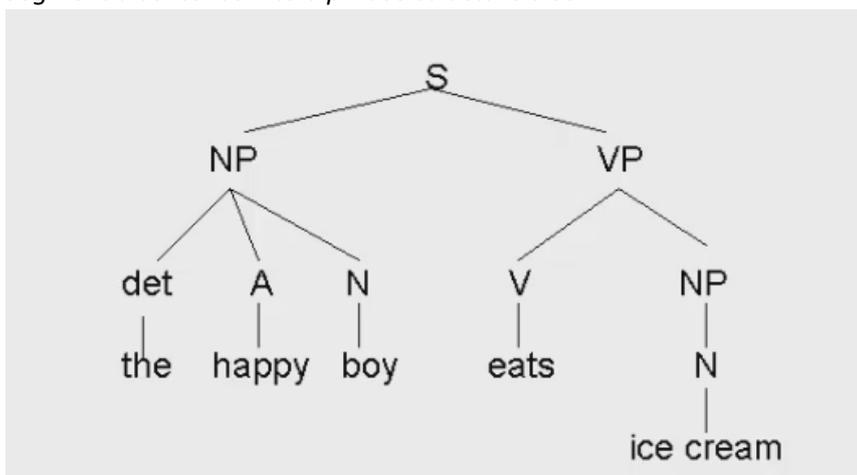
- Describe the organization of phrase structures (including prescriptive and descriptive rules).

Noun phrases: A noun phrase contains an adjective and noun, and an optional determiner.

Sentence phrase: Contains a noun phrase and verb phrase

Verb phrase: Contains a verb and noun phrase

- Segment a sentence into a phrase structure tree



- Describe the function of phrase structures

Phrase structures help us identify the subject, the predicate, the direct object, and the adverb phrase.