Introducing English Linguistics
Lesson n. 14
Text & Context

References:

Required textbooks

- *Discovering language* (Lesley Jeffries)
  → pp. 190-192
Context

- The language we use is affected by the people we interact with, our status in particular situations, our recent experiences, our place of origin, our political, religious or social outlook
- Some of these factors are described by sociolinguistics, dialectology, pragmatics, conversation analysis and stylistics

- Two aspects of meaning that are both textual and contextual in nature.

  - **Deixis** is one feature of reference that is so pervasive and significant in terms of textual meaning
    - Function  → to make direct links with the situational context of the speaker or writer.
    - Form  → is textually based in English (e.g. Adverbs of place (e.g. *here* and *there*)

  - **Metafunctions** *(Theory of the fundamental functions of language, by Halliday):*
    - Interpersonal
    - Ideational
    - Textual
  - Utterances do not necessarily have only one of these functions
  - Each one is about a different aspect of the world
Lessons n. 15-16
Lexicology & The structure of English lexicon

References:

Required textbooks

- *Words, meaning and vocabulary*
- Jackson – Zé Amvela
  → chapter 1

- *Discovering language*
- Lesley Jeffries
  → chapter 7, p. 195-196
Lexicology

- Lexicology
  - As a level of analysis
  - The study of lexicon (the stock of words) in a language
    - Simple words
    - Complex words

- Lexicology & …
  - Morphology
  - Phonology
  - Semantics
  - Syntax
  - Lexicography
  - Etymology
The structure of English lexicon

• How is lexicon structured and organised?
  
  1. **Associative fields** → Every word is involved in a network of associations

    • Associations may be based on
      - Similarity of meaning
      - Similarity of form
      - Similarity of form and meaning

• Structuralist viewpoint
  
  • The units of language are defined by the relationships they hold with other units of the language.

• De Saussure (1959)
  
  • A term is the centre of a constellation, where an infinite number of coordinated terms converge
  
  • graphic formula to represent association in the form of a diagram
1. Associative fields

- The word and its associative fields

Verb forms
Semantic & formal similarity based on a common stem

Nouns
Semantic similarity

Nouns
Formal similarity based on a common suffix

Adjective & Adverb
Accidental formal similarity
1. Associative fields

Structuralist viewpoint

- Relationship between words
  - A) two or more units can fulfil similar functions in a structure
    - \(\rightarrow\) ASSOCIATIVE RELATIONS (De Saussure 1959)
    - \(\rightarrow\) PARADIGMATIC RELATIONS (Hjelmslev 1963)
      - (in absentia)
      - Two words are said to be in a paradigmatic relationship with each other with regard to their function

- B) the combination of units in a structure
  - \(\rightarrow\) SYNTAGMATIC RELATIONS
    - (in praesentia)
    - the items occurring alongside each other in a structure are said to be in a syntagmatic relationship.
The structure of English lexicon

• How is lexicon structured and organised?

• 2. Lexical field theory (1950s von Humboldt and Herder)
  
  • The vocabulary of a language is a dynamic system of lexemes structured by relationships of meaning
    
    • General – Particular relationship
    
    • Part – Whole relationship

• Lexical or semantic field
  
  • “A named area of meaning in which lexemes interrelate and define each other in specific ways” (Crystal 1995: 157)
  
  • E.g.
    
    • Kinship terms: father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, uncle, grandmother, …
The structure of English lexicon

- How is lexicon structured and organised?

- 3. Word families

Families are divided into a set of levels (Bauer & Nation 1993)
- Established on a number of criteria
  - Frequency → The number of words in which an affix occurs
    - Agent: -er more frequent than -ist
  - Productivity → The extent to which an affix is used to form new words
    - -ly is still highly productive ADJ → ADV
  - Predictability → Of the meaning of the affix
    - -ness only ADJ → NOUN, meaning “quality of”
  - Regularity
    - of spelling or pronunciation of base and affix
    - of the function of an affix in terms of the word class to which it attaches
Lessons n. 17-18

References:

Required textbooks

• *Words, meaning and vocabulary*
• Jackson – Zé Amvela
  → chapter 2
## History of English & Periods of English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of English</th>
<th>Period</th>
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<tr>
<td>Old English (OE)</td>
<td>450-1066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle English (ME)</td>
<td>1066-1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Modern (EMod)</td>
<td>1500-1800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern (ModE)</td>
<td>1800-present</td>
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</table>
English language

- English is Germanic in origin
  - Even though it is a Germanic language, English has adopted a large number of words from other languages
    - roughly half of its words derive from contacts with French and Latin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.1</th>
<th>Percentages of English word origins</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old English</td>
<td>French</td>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1.2</th>
<th>The first, second, and third 1,000 most frequent words and their origins</th>
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<tr>
<td>Old English</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Origins of English lexicon

• Native English vocabulary
  • Anglo-Saxon words
    • common words, short and concrete terms, the most frequent, everyday speech
  • Influence of Celtic words
    • Only a handful of Celtic words were borrowed (from Latin)

• Loanwords
  • Latin words (popular and learned loanwords)
  • Scandinavian words
  • Greek words
  • French & other Romance languages words
  • German & Dutch words
  • East languages
  • Other sources
Recent times borrowings

- The frequency of borrowing is considerably reduced;
  - Garland Cannon (1987) \(\rightarrow\) recent loanwords from 84 languages
    - 25% are from French
    - 8% each from Japanese and Spanish
    - 7% each from Italian and Latin
    - 6% each from African languages, German and Greek
    - 4% each from Russian and Yiddish
    - 3% from Chinese
    - progressively smaller percentages from Arabic, Portuguese, Hindi, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Afrikaans, Malayo- Polynesian, Vietnamese, Amerindian languages, Swedish, Bengali, Danish, Indonesian, Korean, Persian, Amharic, Eskimo-Aleut, Irish, Norwegian, and 30 other languages’
Lessons n. 19-20

References:

• *Words, meaning and vocabulary*
  Jackson – Zé Amvela
  • chapter 3
  • chapter 5

• *Discovering language*
  Lesley Jeffries
  • chapter 6
  • chapter 7, pp. 196-200
The notion of word

Possible definition

• The word is i) an uninterruptible unit of structure ii) consisting of one or more morphemes iii) which typically occurs in the structure of phrases

  • i) The internal stability is respected (position of affixes)
    • E.g. Write → Writer, Conscious → Unconscious

  • ii) Morphemes cannot be broken down into smaller meaningful units
    • E.g. dog, read, man, work

  • iii) Morphemes build words, words build phrases, phrases build clauses, clauses build sentences
    • Higher level units may be used in lower level units
    • E.g. The man who came late was my brother
The notion of word

• Sources of ambiguity
  • Abstract reference
    • animal vs cat
  • Classes of things or event, not single items
    • Table: non-distinctive features (shape, size, colour, legs)
  • Not homogeneous in their meaning
    • Table in a restaurant, table of contents, a multiplication table
  • Lack of clear-cut boundary in the non-linguistic world
    • Arbitrary distinctions in a language
      • E.g. Colour spectrum is a continuum
  • Lack of familiarity with the referent
    • E.g. town-dwellers and agricultural terms
The notion of word

F. de Saussure, *A Course in General Linguistics (Cours de linguistique générale)* 1916

The word as a linguistic sign

→ Linguistic signs are bilateral

- a *signifier*, the physical manifestation of the linguistic unit in sounds or words
- a *signified*, the potential range of referents of the signifier in a language.
Lexeme

• Word vs *Lexeme* → coined by Lyons
  • → an abstract linguistic unit with different variants
    • E.g.
      • Saffron had *danced* since she was little, and everyone said she should *dance* on the stage
      • e.g. *dance, danced*

• → Headwords in a dictionary (Crystal 1995:118)

• → «A unit of lexical meaning which exists regardless of any inflectional endings it may have or the number of words it may contain» (Crystal 1995:118)
  • E.g.
    • *Big, boy, down* → *lexemes*
    • *Point of view, hurry up, in front of* → *multiword lexemes*
Combinations of lexemes
Combinations of lexemes

Word combinations:

- **A_free combinations**: 
  - *(John is eating a sandwich)*

- **B_collocations**: 
  - *(pretty girl)*

- **C_multiword lexemes**: 
  - *(to shed light on, take a shower)*

- **D_idioms**: 
  - *(kick the bucket)*

- **E_proverbs**: 
  - *(two wrongs don't make a right)*
Combinations of lexemes

Word combinations:

- **A_free combinations**
  - Selectional restrictions

- **B_collocations**
  - A tendency to co-occur (habitual association) based on individual items
  - High degree of predictability
    - E.g. PLAY–ROLE (play a role, play a key role, the role played by, role-play, a new role to play)
  - Weak vs strong
  - Lexical vs Grammatical
Combinations of lexemes

Word combinations:

C_Multiword lexemes

E.g. (point of view, in front of, to shed light on, take a shower)
- complex lexical items composed of two or more words syntactically bound
- different functional categories
- semantically unpredictable
- syntactically fixed

Multiword verbs
- Classified on the basis of i) transitivity, ii) the position of the direct object and iii) the number of particles following the verb
  - A) Prepositional verbs
  - B) Phrasal verbs
  - C) Phrasal prepositional verbs
Combinations of lexemes

- Word combinations:
  - **D_idioms**
    - E.g. *to kick the bucket, to use a red herring, take the bull by the horns*
  
  - Phrases
  - Similar to MWL
  - Frozen metaphors
  - Peculiar syntactic properties (no passivisation, no substitution, no omission)

- **Classification**
  - Full vs partial idioms
Lexicology & Semantics

• Meaning
  • Possible definition:
  • *Meaning is the relation between a linguistic expression and the entity for which it can be used*

• Reference → external meaning relation
  • Between a word and the entity in our physical/mental world
    • E.g. *tree* → plant having a trunk, branches, leaves

• Sense → internal meaning relation
  • Between words within the vocabulary
    • E.g. sameness/oppositeness, hierarchy
    • E.g. *tree* → plant, oak
Types of meanings

• **Denotational meaning**
  • The set of potential referents of a word
  • Refers to the entire class of entities (central meaning of a linguistic sign)
  • independent of its use in any particular situation
  • shared by a community
    • E.g. I don’t like fish

• **Connotational meaning**
  • additional properties of a lexeme attached to the base meaning
    • Speaker’s attitude towards a referent
    • Speaker’s attitude towards a situation (associated to formal/informal style)
    • Some words mark out a person as teenager (e.g. cool)
    • Some words may describe the positive/negative evaluation of the speaker
Types of meaning

• Literal meaning
  • Of an expression in a given language
  • E.g. body part nouns: head, face, foot, leg, tongue, eye

• Transferred meaning
  • Non-literal → meaning extension
  • The meaning is reinterpreted due to a similitude between two situations
  • E.g.
    • Head or face of a clock
    • Foot of a mountain
    • Leg of a table
Semantic relations between lexemes
Meaning relations

• Words may have
  • Multiple meanings
  • The same meaning
  • Opposite meanings
  • Hierarchies of meaning

• Meaning relations are relevant for the way in which we store words in our mental lexicon (Aitchison 2002)
  • → the vocabulary is not an unstructured collection of words
    • E.g. lexical fields (the contexts within a meaning relation is established)
Meaning relations

• Words may have
  • Same form, Different meanings
  
  → Homonymy, Homographs, Homophones
  • Two completely different words happen to have the same form
    • Bank → 1. riversides 2. the storage and retrieval of money
  • Unrelated meanings
  • Different etymologies
  • Separate entries in the dictionaries
  • may belong to different PoS
  • are in “complementary distribution”
  • a rare and accidental phenomenon
Meaning relations

• Words may have
  • Same form, Multiple meanings
  
  → Polysemy
  • E.g.
    • the *university* hired a professor
    • the *university* is close to the station
    • the *university* is friendly
    • the meaning of a word may change according to the context of use
    • the meaning can be literal or transferred
    • is pervasive and follows regular patterns
    • a factor of economy and flexibility in languages
Meaning relations

• Words may have

  • The same meaning  \(\rightarrow\) Synonymy
    • E.g. *big* – *large*
    • the meaning of two word senses is the same (same denotation)
    • Strict vs loose synonymy (Cruse 1986)
      • Possible contexts
      • Semantic features
      • Connotations
      • Grammatical features

  • Opposite meanings  \(\rightarrow\) Antonymy
    • Morphologically: unrelated or related
    • Semantically: Gradable (*expensive* – *cheap*), Complementary (*dead* – *alive*), Converse (*buy* – *sell*), Directional (*up/down*)
Meaning relations

• Words may have
  • Hierarchies of meaning
    • More general vs more specific meaning
      • Hyponymy
        • “X is a kind of Y” relation
        • A rose is a kind of flower
        • Superordinates (semantically simpler) & hyponyms
      • Meronymy
        • “X is part of Y” relationship
        • Part-whole relationship
        • A petal is part of a flower
The analysis of meaning into components

• Words can be analysed into a finite number of features
  • Universal to all languages
  • → componential analysis

• Semantic components
  • Contribute to the establishment of the essential meaning difference between words
  • Binary features  +/- ANIMATE, +/- MALE, +/- CONCRETE
    • E.g. *man* = +ADULT, +HUMAN, +MALE

• originally devised by anthropologists as a means of comparing vocabulary from different cultures
• developed by semanticists for the analysis of meaning
Semantic primitives or primes

- Words whose meaning is so basic that cannot be further analysed (Wierzbicka 1995, 1996)
  - A basic set of meanings (related to innate human concepts) common to all people

- Semantic primitives
  - Indefinable concepts of all languages
  - cannot be understood better than by themselves
    - These words are understood by everyone and require no definition.
  - Can be used to define words with more complex meaning
  - Fundamental human concepts capable of generating all other concepts

- Semantic primes are expressible by words, phrases or affixes in all or most of the world’s languages
Lessons n. 21-22

References:

- *Introduction to English Linguistics*
  - Ingo Plag, Sabine Arndt-Lappe, Maria Braun, Mareile Schramm
  - Chapter 6
Pragmatics

• Users of a language have
  • A grammatical competence
  • A pragmatic competence

• Pragmatics
  • Language as used in concrete situations
  • Implied meanings, speaker’s intentions, effects on the listener
  • Rules or principles that speakers and listeners observe in order to use language effectively and successfully
Sentence vs Utterance

- **Sentence**
  - a formal, structural unit

- **Utterance**
  - a realisation of a speaker’s communicative intention

**Sentence vs Utterance**

- Utterances quite often do not equal sentences formally.
- i) There are utterances which consist of less than a sentence.
  - E.g. “At home”
    - → formally a PP, not a sentence,
    - → pragmatically it is an utterance.

- ii) There are utterances that comprise more than a sentence.
  - E.g. “This programme is simply awful. It’s absolutely frustrating”
    - → formally two sentences.
Speech acts

• John L. Austin (1962) → Speech Act Theory
  • Speech acts → linguistic actions performed by speakers in a certain context with a certain communicative intention
    • i.e. we do things by language rather than just referring to the truth or falsity of a particular statement.

• We use the term speech acts to describe actions such as:
  • Asking questions
  • Making requests
  • Giving orders
  • Making promises
  • Giving an advice
  • Making threats
Expressing intentions through language

- Austin → three types of acts occur in everything we say

A → Locution
the linguistic form of a speech act, the physical act of producing an utterance

B → Illocution
the act that is performed by producing an utterance (e.g. giving an order).

C → Perlocution
the production of an (intended) effect through locution and illocution (e.g. the execution of the order by the addressee).
Speech acts

• A great variety of speech acts performed by speakers
  • About 500-600 speech act types

Classification by John Searle (1969)

- **Declarations**
  speech acts that modify a state of affairs simply by being uttered

- **Assertions or Representatives**
  speech acts whereby speakers assert a state of affairs

- **Expressives**
  speech acts whereby speakers express their attitude towards something

- **Directives**
  speech acts whereby speakers try to get listeners to do something

- **Commissives**
  speech acts whereby speakers commit themselves to some future action
Direct vs indirect speech acts

• Form & Function → degrees of directness

• The same illocution can be realised in different ways, which may differ in terms of directness.

  • DIRECT SA:
    • speech acts in which the relation between the linguistic form (i.e. locution) and the linguistic function (illocution) is straightforward.

  • INDIRECT SA:
    • speech acts where there is a mismatch between linguistic form and linguistic function.
Felicity conditions

• What makes a certain utterance a successful or unsuccessful speech act? Certain types of conditions should usually be met → felicity conditions, since they make an utterance a felicitous, i.e. successful, speech act.

• 1. “General” condition
  • the hearer must be able to understand the locution

• 2. “Propositional content” condition
  • The act that the speaker commits him/herself to must be a future action to be performed by the speaker him/herself.

• 3. Ability condition
  • The speaker must have the necessary ability (mentally, physically, and/or financially) to perform the act promised

• 4. “Preparatory” condition’
  • where the authority of the speaker and the circumstances of the speech act are appropriate to the intended perlocution

• 5. ‘Sincerity condition’
  • The speaker should earnestly and sincerely intend to carry out the act.

• 6. ‘Essential condition’
  • focuses upon the illocutionary act
  • E.g. a successful compliment → it should count for both the speaker and the hearer as the realisation of this act
Understanding utterance meaning

- Understanding utterance meanings requires the knowledge of some information
- Key aspects of **contexts** crucial to the production and interpretation of discourse

**Context**
- any factor (linguistic, physical, social) that affects the actual interpretation of signs and expressions
  - A. Situational context/knowledge
  - B. Background knowledge
    - Interpersonal knowledge
    - World knowledge
  - C. Linguistic (co-textual) knowledge
Conversational maxims

• The mere knowledge of the different types of context is not sufficient.
• Grice (1975) → communication is a rational and cooperative activity (Cooperative Principle)
• The different conventions can be regarded as sub-principles of this pragmatic principle
  • → the maxims of the Cooperative Principle, or as ‘conversational maxims’

• 1. ‘Maxim of quantity’
  • provide as much information as required for the purposes of the conversation, and don’t
    make it more informative or less informative than required
• 2. ‘Maxim of relevance’
  • be relevant
• 3. ‘Maxim of manner’
  • avoid obscurity, ambiguity, unnecessary prolixity, being brief, clear and orderly
• 4. ‘Maxim of quality’
  • do not say what you believe to be false

• Interlocutors usually conform to the Cooperative Principle and thus observe the maxims and
  the background or situational knowledge.
  • An inference drawn in this way is called conversational implicature because it holds only in the context of a particular
    conversation.
Conversational maxims

• A speaker ‘flouts’ rather than violates the maxim of relevance

• **Flouting** is a rather frequent phenomenon in everyday interactions.

• Problems → it makes the hearer’s task more complex in that he or she has to look for the implied meaning.

• Goals → the desire not to upset or insult the addressee of the utterance
  → the management of our personal relationships
Politeness

- Lakoff (1990: 34): “Politeness is a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict”.

- Politeness implies the concept of face:
  - face
    - all of us have a certain social self-image → in sociolinguistics, Goffman (1967)
  - self-image face
    - → the public self-image (taken up by Brown and Levinson 1987)

- We have both a positive face and a negative face.
  - The speaker’s positive face.
    - the desire to be admired, loved, and accepted by others.
    - → when the polite behaviour is directed towards the positive face of the interlocutor, we speak of positive politeness

- The speaker’s negative face
  - the speaker’s desire not to be imposed on by the others
  - need for freedom
  - → negative politeness → the speaker’s linguistic strategy to minimise the threat to the hearer’s negative face.
Face Threatening Acts (FTA):

• Face Threatening Act (FTA)
  • an illocutionary act which is able to damage another person’s reputation → threaten other people’s face.

• There are two types of FTAs:
  
  • Acts threatening the positive face of the addressee:
    • E.g. offers and promises from the speaker

  • Acts threatening the negative face of the addressee:
    • indicating that the speaker does not intend to avoid impeding hearer’s freedom of action
    • suggest hearer will have to do some future act
    • E.g. orders, requests, threats, and warnings from the speaker
Lesson n. 23-(24)

References:

Required textbooks

• *Discovering language* (Lesley Jeffries)
  → Chapters 1-2
Subfields of phonetics

• Acoustic phonetics
  • how the sounds of speech are transmitted through the air between speaker and hearer

• Auditory phonetics
  • how hearers receive the sounds of speech and decode them

• Articulatory phonetics
  • how the speaker creates the sounds
    • closer to the biological than to the physical sciences
Vowels and Consonants

• Qualitative difference
  • due to the different kinds of modification the two categories of sound make to the airstream.

• Consonants
  • squeeze and constrict the airflow, to the extent of sometimes stopping it altogether

• Vowels
  • allow free passage of air through the mouth (and nose), but with a variable shaped cavity in which the sound resonates differently, causing the different sounds of the vowels.
Consonants

• The way in which we describe consonants in phonetic terms is according to:

  • Classification
    • VPM (voice-place-manner) description

    • A) where they take place (where the obstruction of the airflow takes place)
    • B) how they are articulated (‘manner’) (partial or complete obstruction)
    • C) whether the vocal folds are vibrating (‘voice’)

Lessons 14-24: Introducing English linguistics
Vowels

• Unlike consonants, vowels do not involve any serious constriction of the airflow from the lungs.
  • An enormous range of vowel sounds in English:
    • 5 graphemes, approximately 21 vowel sounds

• Vowels
  • are all voiced
  • all formed with only the tongue and the palate

• Classification of English vowels
  • A. Position of the tongue
    • Height of the tongue
    • Frontness/backness of the tongue
  • B. Lip-rounding
    • whether the lips are rounded or not
  • C. Length
Diphthongs

- Diphthongs
  - are a combination of two different positions of the tongue
  - combine two articulations and consequently two different sound qualities

- In the transcription of a diphthong
  - the first symbol represents the starting point of the tongue body
  - the second symbol represents the direction of movement

- We divide them up according to the final vowel of the diphthong:
  - A. those ending with schwa, /ə/
  - B. those ending with /i/
  - C. those ending with /u/
Syllable

• Syllable
  • a phonological unit made up of one/more phonemes

• Vowels are the centre of linguistic syllables
  • → the English syllable is, at its simplest, made up of a single vowel
    • E.g. eye, or

Syllable
• Most common pattern of syllable in the world’s languages
• → the simple ‘open’ syllable
  • E.g. CVC (e.g. car, bag)
Stress

• In English, word stress is usually phonetic
  • → it does not contribute to meaning and is not connected to the structure of the words in any evident way.

• English has free stress
  • → it does not occur regularly in the same place in the word, although there is a preference for stress not to be placed on the first syllable of multisyllabic words.

• Words with more than one syllable may have a primary (and sometimes a secondary) stress, and unstressed syllables too.
  • E.g. breakfast

• There is a growing tendency (particularly, but not only, in American English) to make noun–verb pairs conform to the following stress difference:

  • /kɔntrəːst/ (contrast, n.) / kəntrəːst/ (contrast, v.)
Phonology

- Phonology is the study of the abstract categories that organise the sound system of a language.

- These abstract categories comprise
  - individual speech sounds
  - the way in which speech sounds are grouped into larger phonological units, such as syllables and words

- **Phonemes**
  - The minimal distinctive unit in the phonology of a language

- **Phone**
  - The physical realisation of a speech sound

- **Allophones**
  - Phones which function as alternant realisations of the same phoneme
  - complementary distribution

- **Minimal pairs**
  - minimal pair is a pair of words which differ in only one sound (consonant or vowel), but differ in meaning
Connected speech

- Phonemes generally analysed as separate segments of the stream of speech, but many modifications occur when these segments are put together in connected speech.

- The features of connected speech fall into two categories:
  - **Segmental features**
    - result in the adaptation of the segments (phonemes) to their surroundings.
    - Assimilation (anticipatory or progressive)
    - Elision
    - Insertion
  - **Suprasegmental aspects**
    - are spread over a number of phonemes and introduce meanings that are additional to the meanings of the words themselves
    - Utterance stress
    - Intonation (grammatical and informative function)