

Day 2

Language and People

Questions to talk about

- ❑ How and why do people use language?
- ❑ What does it mean to use a language correctly?
- ❑ How and why does a language differ among its speakers?
- ❑ What's the difference between a spoken language and a written language?

Lots of languages

- Probably as many as 6000 languages still spoken today
- Probably twice that many or more are now extinct
- By the end of this century there will likely be half as many left
- A language is identified by the fact that some group of people speak or write it (or speak or wrote it)



Top 40 languages by number of native speakers

Languages by scope & impact

Type of Language	Number of Languages	Number of Speakers (1st & 2nd)	Percent of World Population
Peripheral languages	5880	616,000,000	0.08
Central languages	100	7,315,000,000	0.95
Supercentral languages	13	5,466,000,000	0.71
Hypercentral language	1	1,132,000,000	0.15
Speakers Across All Languages		13,397,000,000	World Pop ~7.7bn ~75% are bilingual
Total Bilingual Speakers		5,697,000,000	

Supercentral Languages

Mandarin
 Spanish
 English
 Arabic
 Portuguese
 Hindi
 French
 German
 Malay
 Russian
 Swahili
 Turkish
 Japanese

Hypercentral Language

English



“When you lose a language, you lose a culture, intellectual wealth, a work of art. It's like dropping a bomb on a museum, the Louvre.”

— Ken Hale

Speech acts

Informative	How to describe things & people	I'm 6 foot 5 and I play basketball.
Expressive	How to express attitudes	I really thought that movie last night was great.
Persuasive	How to get stuff done or get others to do things	I'd like us to go to the beach this weekend.
Interactive	How to control a conversation	I haven't seen you in forever. Where have you been?
Explorative	How to find out stuff or talk about finding stuff out	Where would I go for a great hamburger?
Enjoyment	How to play with language	Hickory, dickory, dock, the mouse went up the clock.

The speech act in practice

The meaning of “Can you see me?”

Identifying	Can you see me over here? [waving]
Social positioning	Can you see me as president?
Requesting	Can you see me today please?
Specifying a context	Can you see me in my office?
Expressing / emoting	Can you see me acting like that?

The cooperative principle of communication

“Make your contribution such as is required by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. Be sensitive to the fact that requirements can change with the stage at which the conversation exchange occurs.”

— Paul Grice, *Logic and conversation*

Maxim of quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true. Do not say what you believe is false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of quantity

Make your contribution as informative as is required. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of relation

Be relevant -- whatever that means at the moment.

Maxim of manner

Be perspicuous. Avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief. Be orderly.

What happens when speakers violate one or more of the maxims?

What's in a word



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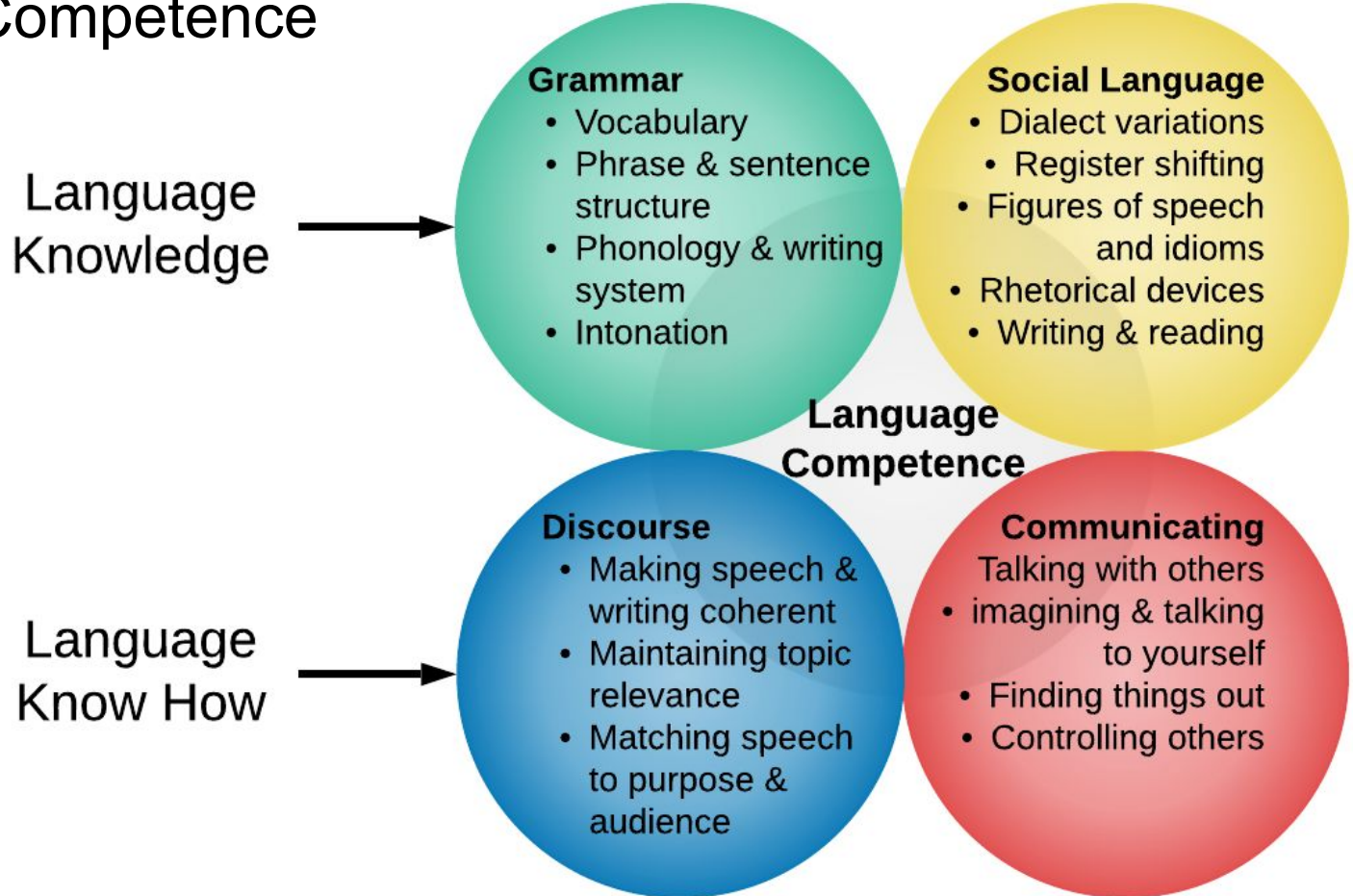
“Language is not a neutral instrument. It is a thousand ways biased.

— Dwight Bolinger, *Language: The Loaded Weapon*

Language and environment



Language Competence



Understanding what I say in context

Understanding what someone says is about detecting **language patterns** that map to **norms** or **frames** of cultural behavior.

When you're operating within a **familiar cultural frame**, you form **expectations** about what a speaker, who we assume is **acting cooperatively**, is **intending** to communicate.

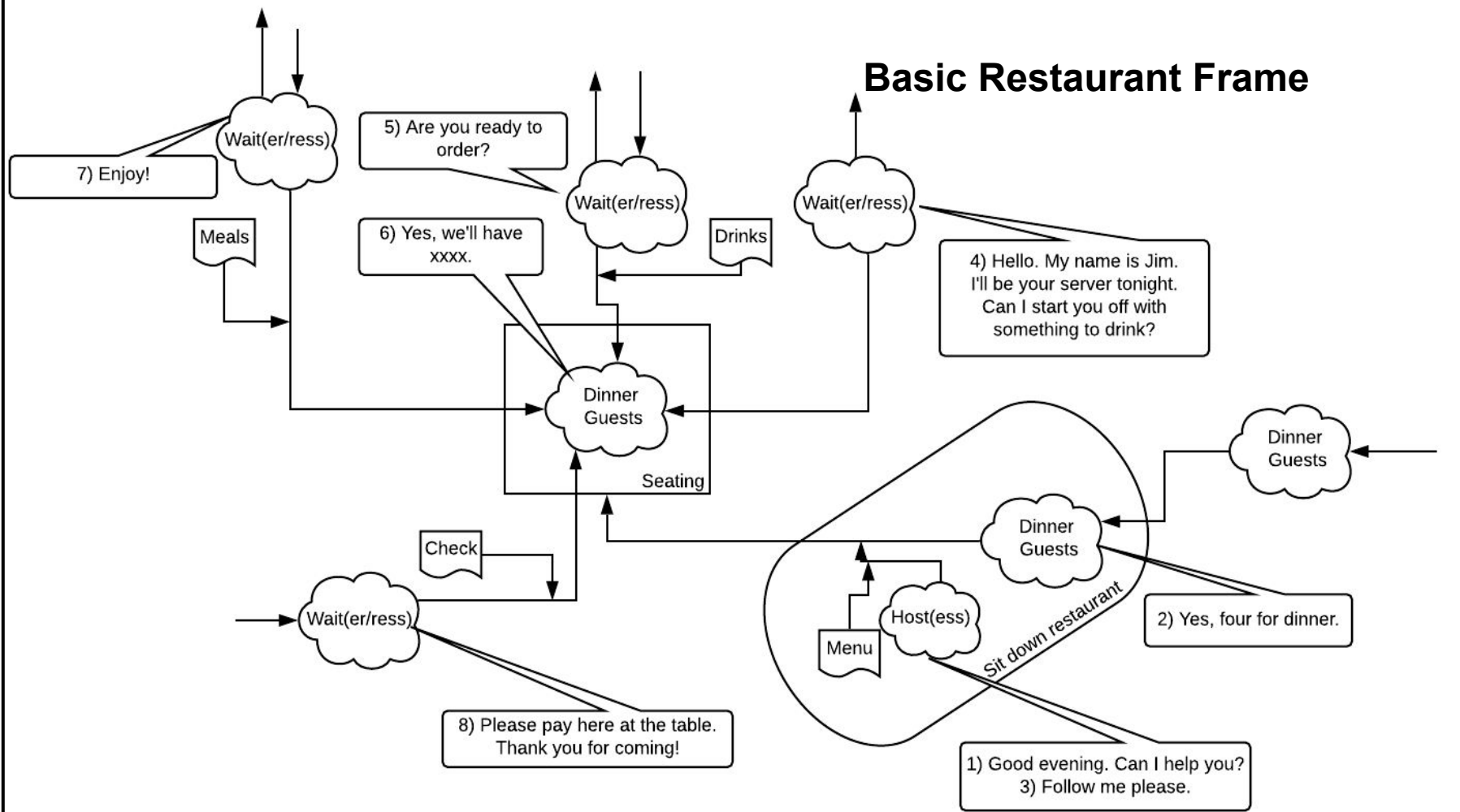
The components of most frames include:

actors, actor roles, objects, actions of actors on other actors, actions of actors on objects, effects of objects on actors, effects of objects on other objects, locations, event sequences, goals

How do these questions relate to language ability and cultural savvy?

- Why do young people not vote as often as older people?
- Why do young people have more traffic accidents than older people?
- Why do young people have difficulties reading Shakespeare?
- Why do young people tend to party harder than older people?

Basic Restaurant Frame



How to tell you're on a date with a linguist

“Once [a grammar] is employed in schoolrooms, people feel that the rules are not just descriptions of how people do talk, but prescriptions for how they should talk.”
— David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules*

What do you recommend?

Sorry, I'm a descriptivist,
not a prescriptivist.



A linguist dies. At the funeral, a fellow academic asks the wife, "Do you mind if I say a word?" She nods. He stands and says "Plethora", and immediately sits down. She says, tearfully, "That means a lot."

Written language vs spoken language

Speaking

“Once you talk English good, can't nothing change it.”

— Lamont Sanford

- **Evaporates**
- **Short sentences**
- **Loosely connected clauses**
- **Choppy delivery**
- **Common vocabulary**
- **Flexible structure**
- **Intoned, gestured, & body languaged**

Writing

“This is the type of arrant pedantry up with which I will not put.”

— Winston S. Churchill

- **(Semi)-permanent**
- **Longer sentences**
- **Often embedded clauses**
- **Smooth delivery**
- **Educated vocabulary**
- **Rule based structure**
- **Not intoned, gestured, or body languaged**

Scripts: “I can read and write my language”

Я могу читать и писать на своем языке.	Μπορώ να διαβάσω και να γράψω τη γλώσσα μου.	Dokážu číst a psát svůj jazyk.
我会读写我的语言。	私は自分の言語を読み書きできます。	나는 언어를 읽고 쓸 수 있습니다.
אני יכול לקרוא ולכתוב את השפה שלי	يمكنني قراءة وكتابة لغتي	من می توانم زبانم را بخوانم و بنویسم
ฉันสามารถอ่านและเขียนภาษาของฉัน	ខ្ញុំអាចអាននិងសរសេរភាសាខ្មែរបាន	ကျွန်ုပ်တို့က သာသနာတော်တပြုံးရေးနိုင်
मैं अपनी भाषा पढ़ और लिख सकता हूँ।	எனது மொழியை என்னால் படிக்கவும் எழுதவும் முடியும்.	මට මගේ භාෂාව කියවීමට හා ලිවීමට හැකිය.

- Russian
- Greek
- Czech
- Chinese
- Japanese
- Korean
- Hebrew
- Arabic
- Persian
- Thai
- Khmer
- Burmese
- Hindi
- Tamil
- Sinhala