**Structural Linguistics**

**Seminar 4**

**Exercises**

**The Nature of Signs**

**1. Identify the following nonlinguistic signs as iconic, indexical, or symbolic, or as a combination of any two.**

a. a wave of the hand (for goodbye)

b. a picture of a cigarette with a red circle around it and a diagonal slash through it

c. a road map

d. a stop sign

e. the footprints of an animal in the mud

f. a jack-o'-lantern

g. thunder

h. the human figure depicted on the washroom door

i. skull and crossbones (as a sign for poison)

j. the smell of a skunk

**2. All of the following linguistic signs (underlined), as well as being arbitrary, are in part either iconic or indexical. Say which they are.**

a. The balloon rose higher and higher into the sky.

b. Here is your coat.

c. Do you want a fizzy drink?

d. This pan is big, but I need the biggest pan that you have.

e. The building was h-u-u-ge.

f. He sneered and snickered.

g. To the left is a picture by Michelangelo.

i. We were awakened by the cock-a-doodle-doo of the rooster.

**3. Say whether the order of the clauses in each of the following is iconic or arbitrary.**

a.

i. Close all of the windows before you go.

ii. Before you go, close all of the windows.

b.

i. Before I saw Helene, she had eaten lunch.

ii. Helene had eaten lunch before I saw her.

**4. Look at the following statements. Decide whether they represent principles (universal features of languages in general) or parameters (the differences in the syntax of specific languages)?**

a. In statements, the subject precedes the verb.

b. There are question words that request information about *who, what, when,* etc.

c. There exists a system for negation.

d. Questions are formed by inverting the subject and verb.

e. A sentence contains a subject, though it may not be overtly expressed.

f. Adjectives precede the noun that they modify.

g. The basic word order of a sentence is SuVO.

h. In statements, the subject must be overtly expressed.

i. Tense is indicated by adverbials.

j. Nouns refer to people, places, or things.

k. There is a means of expressing number.

**5. Using your intuitions about grammaticality in English, decide whether the following sentences are grammatical (acceptable) or ungrammatical by the rules of English. Note that there may be some borderline cases or some structures that while once ungrammatical are gaining acceptance as the language changes.**

a. That car must have been driven by a madman.

b. Sally is easy to talk to.

c. Sally is eager to talk to.

d. Alana sent New York a present.

e. Alana sent Marna a present.

f. We gifted them a bottle of wine.

g. Who is the author Jane told Krista Harold had hoped to talk to?

h. It was chained to the door that I saw the dog.

i. It was in front of the store that I met my friend.

j. What classes did you sleep through?

k. What classes did they meet between?

l. The British aggressed against the Americans in the Revolutionary War.

**6. a. Using your intuition about possible sound combinations in English, decide which of the following nonsense words would be possible in English and which would not. Hint: See if there are other words in English which have the same sound combinations.**

1. shwem
2. paynk
3. mansd
4. pwing
5. gwit
6. fiemp
7. runba
8. melch
9. fwist
10. aspt
11. rast
12. neyz

**b. Imagine that the above possible nonsense words are nouns. What would their plural sound like – would it end in an “s” sound (as in *cats*), a “z” sound (as in *dogs*), or an “ez” sound (as in *bushes*). Hint: If *runba* were a noun, its plural would end in the “z” sound.**

**c. Imagine that the above possible nonsense words above are verbs. What would their past tense sound like – would it end in an “d” sound (as in *paid*), a “t” sound (as in *pushed*), or an “ed” sound (as in *rated*). Hint: If *fiemp* were a verb, its past tense would end in the “t” sound.**

**7. Which of the following sentences violate prescriptive (regulatory) rules and which violate descriptive (constitutive) rules of English? In other words, would such a sentence be judged to be a non-sentence of English or simply nonstandard or uneducated?**

a. You should have saw that movie.

b. I forced that he leave.

c. The data is not conclusive.

d. She was laying in the sun all day.

e. Have finished your homework when I get home.

f. Do you feel badly about the outcome?

g. I saw the man coming from the bank get robbed.

h. We thought for him to win.

i. There's too many people in the elevator.

j. We cleaned up it.

k. Abe has invited you and I to come to dinner.

l. Wearing nothing but a sweater, the cold wind chilled me.

m. When the bone stuck in his throat, he stopped to breathe.

n. The wet campers tried to quickly light the fire.