

Summary of the first semester lessons of linguistics

The keywords for each lesson are underlined and in *italic*.

Lesson One: brief introduction to language/linguistics

We discussed language definition of Chomsky.

We talked about the three main elements of language

We defined linguistics and its components

Lesson Two: animal vs human language

We explained the modes of communication of animals

We have talked and exemplified the features of human language that do not exist in human language such as: creativity, duality of patterning, displacement, interchangeability, ambiguity.

Lesson Three: language families

We have outlined the six main (i.e. major) language families in the world and we have focused on two in details: Indo-European with its eight branches and sub-branches and Semitic languages.

Lesson Four: descriptive vs prescriptive linguistics

In this lesson, we have explained (with reasons) why we speak first and write second (prioritising the spoken language over the written one).

We have also explained the continuum between prescriptive and descriptive linguistics.

We talked about the characteristics of each type of linguistics and their main principles as well.

We have defined the formality of descriptive vs prescriptive linguistics and draw some analogies for further details.

We finally explained language change and gave some examples about that.

Lesson Five: European structural linguistics

We talked about Ferdinand De Saussure contribution to European structural linguistics.

Mainly, we have focused on Saussure's four dichotomies contribution:

1. Signified vs signifier (المدلول والمدلول in Arabic)
2. Synchronic vs diachronic (example of chess analogy and inherent concept)
3. Syntagmatic vs paradigmatic (horizontal and vertical relations between elements of the language)
4. Language and speech (the difference between competence and performance)