Introduction to English Linguistics
What is Language?

Linguistic Knowledge
- What is a language?
- Specifically **human** behaviour - no other animal possesses this ability in the same way
- Sign languages: the same as spoken language, but in a different *medium*
- What do we know when we know a language?

Knowledge of the Sound System
- Sound system = phonology
- Knowing how to pronounce words
- What is possible and impossible
- English *strengths* but not **ngo*
- How non-native speakers pronounce words
- How would a Korean native speaker say English *strengths*?

Knowledge of Words
- Words = lexicon/vocabulary (related to Semantics)
- Arbitrariness of form and meaning
- There is no reason that <cat> means 'cat'
- Sound symbolism - onomatopoeia
- Sounds that suggest the meaning - dog barking
- *gl* words in English

Creativity
- It isn't possible to just memorize all the sentences of a language
- You can always make new sentences that no one has heard before
- 'Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.' (Chomsky)
- So language cannot be simply learning what you hear

Productivity
- This is the house.
- This is the house that Jack built.
- This is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built.
- This is the dog that worried the cat that killed the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built.

Word-building
- Word building = morphology
- Creativity inside the word
- Making new words:
    - English N > V   'fax', 'text', 'hammer'
    - Add something: re-   rewrite, repaint, etc.
    -                 -er :   faxer, texter, etc.
    - Compound: greenhouse, houseboat, etc.
    - Great-great-great-great-grandfather
    - Re-re-re-re-paint the house

Knowledge of Sentences
- Sentence building = Syntax
- Creativity above the word, in the sentence
- 1a. John kissed the little old lady who owned the shaggy dog
-   b. Who owned the shaggy dog John kissed the little old lady
-   c. John is difficult to love.

- d. It is difficult to love John.
- e. John is anxious to go.
- f. It is anxious to go John.

The worst…
- John, who is a student, flunked his exams.
- Exams his flunked student a was who John.

Grammaticality
- Gramaticality is important for sentences
- Grammaticality is also important inside words:
- * er-paint-re, *possible-im, etc.
- Words can't be put together in any order
- There are strict requirements on combining elements of a word
- They also can't be put in the sentence in any order

Competence vs. Performance
- Competence: what you *know* about language
- Performance: what you actually *produce*
- There are factors that can affect performance:
    - Being tired or drunk
    - Interference on the phone or radio, etc.
    - Injury, including severe trauma > aphasia
- Slips of the tongue are performance errors that occur accidentally: cuff of copy < cup of coffee

What is Grammar?
- Descriptive grammars describe what people say when they speak a language
- Records the accurate use of language by native speakers
- 'grammaticality' in descriptive grammar:
    - Based on native speaker judgements
    - Can you say this?

Prescriptive grammar
- Rules imposed by 'experts'
- Follows the prestige dialect
- Based on socio-political status
- There are important social reasons for learning the standard: better job, social status, etc.
- They have nothing to do with being a speaker of a language
- Neither does *literacy:* the majority of languages don't even have a writing system

Second language acquisition
- Teaching grammars are used to teach non-native speakers how to speak a language
- Not the same as how a child learns
- Particular challenges in learning a language as an adult
- Not the same as for a child

Language Universals
- Some aspects of language are *universal:* All languages have them
- Others are language-specific: only belong to a particular language
- Universal properties are hard-wired into our brain
- They are part of what it means to be human

Language and Thought
- Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
- Two versions: weak and strong
- Weak version: the speech environment we live in limits our view of the world
- Strong version: our language controls how we think