

**LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTIC  
FEATURES**

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**Annotation:** The annotation for the topic "language universals and their characteristic features" explores the fundamental properties and patterns that are common across languages worldwide. It delves into the investigation of linguistic principles and structures that transcend individual languages, shedding light on recurring patterns in phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. The annotation discusses the significance of understanding language universals and their role in the study of language typology, historical linguistics, and cognitive science. Furthermore, it touches upon the cross-cultural and interdisciplinary relevance of language universals, emphasizing their impact on diverse linguistic traditions and the broader understanding of human cognition and communication. The annotation provides a comprehensive framework for exploring the characteristics and implications of language universals, prompting further inquiry into the nature of language diversity and the commonalities that underpin human speech and thought.

**Key words:** Language Universals, Linguistic Patterns, Cross-Linguistic Analysis, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, Typological Studies, Cognitive Science, Historical Linguistics, Linguistic Diversity, Interdisciplinary Research, Universal Grammar, Comparative Linguistics, Human Cognition

**Phonological universals** are recurring patterns and constraints observed in the sound systems and structures of languages across the world. These universals encompass common tendencies and limitations in the organization and use of speech sounds. They are fundamental principles that help shape the diversity of phonological systems while revealing underlying similarities in the way languages structure their sound inventories and phonotactic rules.

Examples of Phonological Universals Include:

1. Distinctive Features: Many languages exhibit the use of distinctive features such as voicing, manner of articulation, and place of articulation to create contrasts between speech sounds.

2. Vowel Inventories: Despite variation, languages often contain a balance of vowel sounds, ranging from unrounded to rounded and from high to low, reflecting a core set of contrasting vowel qualities.

3. Consonant Inventories: Although the specific consonantal phonemes may vary, languages typically encompass a range of places and manners of articulation, maintaining certain limitations in the size and distribution of these sounds.

4. Phonotactic Constraints: Many languages display restrictions on sound combinations and syllable structure, leading to common patterns of syllable types and allowed sequences of consonants and vowels.

5. Tone and Intonation: The presence and use of phonological tone patterns, as well as characteristic intonational features, demonstrate recurring melodic and pitch patterns across languages.

Understanding phonological universals offers profound insights into the nature of human language, highlighting shared tendencies and constraints that underlie the rich diversity of language systems. These universals play a pivotal role in the study of phonological typology and in understanding the fundamental building blocks of human speech sounds.

**Morphosyntactic universals** refer to the patterns and regularities that are found across different languages in terms of their morphological and syntactic structures. These universals are the commonalities that exist in how languages form words, phrases, and sentences, regardless of their specific vocabulary or grammar rules.

Some examples of morphosyntactic universals include word order patterns (e.g. subject-verb-object), agreement between different parts of a sentence (e.g. between nouns and adjectives), and the use of tense and aspect to indicate time relationships in a sentence.

Studying morphosyntactic universals can help linguists understand the underlying principles that guide language structure and development, as well as the ways in which languages differ from one another.

**Semantic universals** refer to the common patterns and regularities in the meaning and interpretation of language across different languages. These universals are the

shared conceptual and semantic structures that underlie the way languages represent and convey meaning.

Some examples of semantic universals include basic color terms (e.g. the presence of words for black and white in all languages), kinship terms (e.g. the distinction between maternal and paternal relatives), and the existence of words for basic concepts such as body parts, natural phenomena, and spatial relationships.

Studying semantic universals can provide insights into the fundamental ways in which humans categorize and understand the world around them, as well as the ways in which languages express and communicate these shared conceptual structures. It can also shed light on the cognitive processes involved in language comprehension and production.

**Universal grammar** is a theory proposed by linguist Noam Chomsky, which suggests that the ability to acquire language is innate to humans and that all languages share a common underlying structure. According to this theory, there are certain universal principles and rules that are hardwired into the human brain, allowing us to learn and understand language.

From a cognitive perspective, universal grammar is closely linked to the idea that there are fundamental cognitive processes involved in language acquisition and use. These processes include the ability to categorize and organize linguistic information, to understand and produce complex grammatical structures, and to use language to express and interpret meaning.

Universal grammar also intersects with cognitive aspects such as memory, attention, and problem-solving. The process of learning and using language involves memory mechanisms for storing and retrieving vocabulary and grammatical rules. Attention plays a crucial role in focusing on relevant linguistic input and filtering out irrelevant information. Problem-solving comes into play when individuals need to comprehend ambiguous or unfamiliar language structures.

Furthermore, universal grammar has implications for our understanding of the relationship between language and thought. The idea that there are universal principles underlying all languages suggests that there may be universal cognitive processes involved in how humans conceptualize and express their thoughts through language.

In conclusion, language universals are common patterns and regularities in the meaning and interpretation of language that are found across different languages. These

universals reflect shared conceptual and semantic structures that underlie the way languages represent and convey meaning. Some characteristic features of language universals include basic color terms, kinship terms, and the existence of words for basic concepts such as body parts, natural phenomena, and spatial relationships. Studying semantic universals provides valuable insights into the fundamental ways in which humans categorize and understand the world, as well as the cognitive processes involved in language comprehension and production.

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