

"LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS
FEATURES"

Jizzakh branch of the National University of Uzbekistan
named after Mirzo Ulugbek

The Faculty of Psychology, the department of Foreign languages
Philology and foreign languages

Scientific advisor: Abduraxmonova Zilola Yoqubjon qizi

Student of group 203-20: Anorboyeva Madina Baxtiyor qizi
anorboyevamadina526@gmail.com

Abstract: Language is a fundamental and unique aspect of human cognition. It is a complex system with a wide range of diversity in its manifestations across the world's languages. However, amidst this diversity, linguists have identified certain language universals – common characteristics and features that are shared by all languages. This article provides an overview of language universals, their characteristics, and their significance in understanding the nature of human language.

Keywords: Language universals, linguistic diversity, syntax, semantics, phonology, morphology, language properties.

Introduction: Human languages are incredibly diverse, with thousands of distinct languages spoken across the globe. Yet, beneath this diversity, there exist a set of common features that are shared by all languages, known as language universals. Understanding these universals is crucial for unraveling the underlying structure of human language and the cognitive mechanisms that drive it. This article explores the characteristics and features that define language universals, focusing on syntax, semantics, phonology, and morphology. Language, as a core feature of human cognition, has been a subject of fascination for linguists, psychologists, and cognitive scientists for centuries. The diversity and complexity of the world's languages are staggering, yet there are remarkable similarities that underlie this linguistic diversity. These commonalities, known as language universals, are the focus of our inquiry in this article.

What Are Language Universals? Language universals are features or characteristics shared by all human languages, regardless of their geographical, cultural, or historical origins. They represent the fundamental building blocks of human language, reflecting the innate cognitive structures that underpin our ability to communicate. Linguists study these universals to gain insights into the nature of human cognition and the common ground that underlies linguistic diversity.

Characteristics of Language Universals

1. **Phonological Universals.** Phonological universals pertain to the sounds of language. While languages may have vastly different phonemic inventories and sound patterns, they all share some common phonological features. For example, all languages have consonants and vowels, and they adhere to principles of phonotactics, governing the arrangement of sounds within words.

2. **Grammatical Universals.** Grammatical universals encompass the principles governing the structure of sentences. Some notable grammatical universals include the distinction between nouns and verbs, the presence of tense and aspect, and the use of grammatical agreement. Additionally, all languages have a system for asking questions and forming negative statements.

3. **Semantic Universals.** Semantic universals relate to the meaning expressed in language. There is a universal tendency to express certain core concepts in all languages, such as time, space, quantity, and social relationships. These universals may manifest differently in different languages, but the underlying concepts remain constant.

4. **Pragmatic Universals.** Pragmatic universals concern the use of language in communication. Regardless of the language spoken, humans have a shared ability to engage in conversation, convey politeness, make requests, and employ various speech acts. The Gricean maxims of conversation, such as the principle of relevance, are universally relevant.

5. **Universal Grammar.** The concept of Universal Grammar, proposed by Noam Chomsky, posits that there is an innate, biologically determined cognitive structure that underlies language. According to this theory, languages may vary in their surface structures but share a deep-seated, common syntactic structure. This theory has been influential in the study of language universals.

The Significance of Language Universals. Understanding language universals is crucial for several reasons:

1. **Cognitive Insights.** Studying language universals provides profound insights into the nature of human cognition. By identifying shared features in all languages, researchers can uncover the cognitive processes that underlie language acquisition and use.

2. **Language Typology.** Language universals help linguists classify and categorize languages into various typological groups, such as isolating languages, agglutinative languages, and fusional languages. This typological information aids in the comparative study of languages.

3. Evolutionary Linguistics. Language universals offer insights into the evolutionary history of language. By identifying commonalities that have persisted across various languages, researchers can make inferences about the characteristics of ancestral languages and the evolution of human language.

Conclusion. Language universals are a testament to the common cognitive foundations that underlie human linguistic diversity. These shared characteristics in phonology, grammar, semantics, and pragmatics offer a window into the intricacies of human cognition and the evolutionary history of language. By continuing to investigate and analyze language universals, linguists and cognitive scientists can deepen our understanding of the remarkable and multifaceted phenomenon of human language.

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