

# W

**W\*** see NON-CONFIGURATIONAL LANGUAGES

**wanna-contraction** (*n.*) A term used in EXTENDED STANDARD THEORY and GOVERNMENT-BINDING theory for the process deriving *I wanna go home* from *I want to go home*. It has been suggested that restrictions on *wanna*-contraction and similar processes provide evidence for the view that PROCESSES leave behind TRACES.

**wave** (*n.*) (1) A term used in HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS and SOCIOLINGUISTICS as part of a DYNAMIC MODEL of LANGUAGE change: **wave theory** suggests that speech variations spread from a specific linguistic area, having maximum effect on adjacent languages, and progressively less effect on languages further away – in much the same way that waves in water radiate from a central point of contact. See also DIFFUSION.

(2) A term used in TAGMEMIC GRAMMAR as one mode of the analysis of linguistic UNITS: in the **wave mode**, units at any LEVEL are analysed in terms of their status as VARIANTS MANIFESTED in different CONTEXTS, e.g. MORPHEMIC or TRANSFORMATIONAL processes. This mode is contrasted with the analysis of units in terms of PARTICLES and FIELDS.

**weak** (segments) (*adj.*) see STRENGTH

**weak** (syllables) (*adj.*) see WEIGHT

**weak adequacy** see ADEQUACY

**weak form** One of two possible pronunciations for a WORD, in the context of CONNECTED SPEECH, the other being STRONG. The weak form is that which is the result of a word being UNSTRESSED, as in the normal pronunciation of *of* in *cup of tea*, and in most other GRAMMATICAL WORDS. Several words in English have more than one weak form, e.g. *and* [ænd] can be [ənd], [ən], [n], etc. The notion is also applied to SYNTACTICALLY conditioned forms, such as *my* (weak) *v. mine* (strong).

**weak generative capacity** see CAPACITY

**weak generative power** see POWER

**weak stress** see STRESS

**weak verb** see STRONG VERB

**weather *it*** A term sometimes used in GRAMMATICAL theory for the EXPLETIVE or DUMMY element in such sentences as *It was raining*. It is distinct from ANTICIPATORY *it*.

**weight (*n.*)** (1) In PHONOLOGY, a concept used to distinguish levels of syllabic PROMINENCE, based on the segmental constituency of SYLLABLES. Syllables can be metrically **heavy (H)** or **light (L)**: a light (or ‘weak’) syllable is one whose RHYME comprises a short-vowel NUCLEUS alone or followed by a CODA of no more than one short consonant (in terms of phonological LENGTH, a MORA); a heavy (or ‘strong’) syllable is any other type (its phonological length being greater than one mora). Syllables of structure CVVC or CVCC are sometimes referred to as ‘superheavy’. The **weight-to-stress principle** is the tendency for heavy syllables to receive STRESS. The notion of weight has also come to be important in several models of NON-LINEAR PHONOLOGY. See also COMPENSATORY LENGTHENING.

(2) In SYNTAX, a concept which relates the relative length/COMPLEXITY of different elements of SENTENCE STRUCTURE. For example, a CLAUSE as SUBJECT or OBJECT would be considered heavier than a LEXICAL NOUN PHRASE, which would be heavier than a PRONOUN. Such variations in length and complexity seem to influence the ORDER of elements in languages: for example, there is a preference for short > long linearization in right-branching (VO) languages, and for long > short in left-branching (OV) languages.

**well formed (*adj.*)** A term used in LINGUISTICS, especially in GENERATIVE GRAMMAR, to refer to the GRAMMATICALITY (**well-formedness**) of a SENTENCE. A sentence is well formed if it can be generated by the RULES of a grammar; it is ILL FORMED if it cannot be. The term applies equally to SYNTAX, SEMANTICS and PHONOLOGY.

**wh-** The usual abbreviation for a **wh-word** – a QUESTION WORD (INTERROGATIVE word) or RELATIVE item, such as *what, who, which, when, why, how*, etc. It is used generally in LINGUISTICS with reference to **wh-complements**, **wh-movement**, questions (**wh-questions**) and relative CLAUSES (**wh-relatives**). A **wh-question** is a term used in the grammatical sub-classification of question types to refer to a question beginning with a question word. These ‘particular’ or ‘question word’ questions are contrasted with YES–NO QUESTIONS. The term is commonly used in the context of GENERATIVE GRAMMAR. A **wh-NP** is a noun phrase introduced by a **wh-word** (e.g. *which car, what interest*). **Wh-movement** (**wh-fronting** or **wh-preposing**) is used to refer to a TRANSFORMATIONAL RULE which moves a **wh-phrase** (**wh-XP**) to INITIAL POSITION in the SENTENCE. For example, given a DEEP STRUCTURE of the sentence *Who did you see?* as ‘You past see who’, applying **wh-movement** would result in ‘Who you past see’. **Wh-islands**

are constructions beginning with a *wh*-phrase, out of which it is not possible to move a constituent through a transformational rule (the *wh*-island constraint). In later generative linguistics, several other types of construction are analysed in a way similar to *wh*-questions, such as *that*-relatives and COMPARATIVES; they are known as UNBOUNDED DEPENDENCIES. See also TRACE.

**whistle-speech** (*n.*) A term used in LINGUISTICS to refer to a stylized form of COMMUNICATION, in which whistling substitutes for the TONES of normal SPEECH; also called **whistled speech**. In some DIALECTS (such as Mazatec, in Mexico) quite sophisticated conversations have been observed to take place using whistle-speech. An analogous system of communication is drum-signalling.

**whiz-deletion** (*n.*) A term sometimes used in GENERATIVE GRAMMAR to refer to a TRANSFORMATIONAL RULE which DELETES a RELATIVE PRONOUN and its associated VERB from a relative CLAUSE to produce a POST-modifying PHRASE, e.g. *the woman who was in the street* becoming *the woman in the street*.

**Whorfian** (*adj./n.*) Characteristic of, or a follower of, the views of Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941), especially as propounded in the **Whorfian hypothesis** (alternatively, the SAPIR–WHORF HYPOTHESIS), which states that our conceptual categorization of the world is determined (wholly or partly) by the STRUCTURE of our native LANGUAGE. In its strong form, the hypothesis is not accepted by most LINGUISTS.

**wh-trace** (*n.*) see TRACE

**wide** (*adj.*) A term used in the description of types of VOWEL, referring to a vowel which is articulated with greater PHARYNX width than another with the same TONGUE and lip configuration; it is opposed to **narrow**. The effect is achieved by drawing the root of the tongue forward and lowering the LARYNX. Twi and Akan (West Africa) use a contrast of this kind.

**window** (*n.*) In PHONETICS, the name of a model of COARTICULATION which recognizes a range of ARTICULATORY or ACOUSTIC values with which a FEATURE (e.g. degree of NASALIZATION or lip-ROUNDING) is associated. Windows have a width which represents the range of a SEGMENT's contextual variability: **narrow** windows allow for little variation; **wide** windows allow for a great deal. Adjacent windows are connected by **paths**, or **contours**, constrained by the requirements of smoothness and minimal articulatory effort.

**W-level** (*n.*) see HARMONIC PHONOLOGY

**word** (*n.*) A unit of expression which has universal intuitive recognition by NATIVE-SPEAKERS, in both spoken and written language. However, there are several difficulties in arriving at a consistent use of the term in relation to other CATEGORIES of linguistic description, and in the comparison of languages of different structural types. These problems relate mainly to word identification and definition. They include, for example, decisions over word boundaries (e.g. is a unit such as *washing machine* two words, or is it one, to be written *washing-*

*machine?*), as well as decisions over status (e.g. is *the* a word in the same sense as is *chair?*). Regular definitions of words as ‘units of meaning’, or ‘ideas’ are of no help, because of the vagueness of such notions as ‘idea’. As a result, several theoretical distinctions have been made.

Three main senses of ‘word’ are usually distinguished (though terminology varies):

(a) Words are the physically definable units which one encounters in a stretch of writing (bounded by spaces) or speech (where identification is more difficult, but where there may be PHONOLOGICAL clues to identify boundaries, such as a PAUSE, or JUNCTURE features). ‘Word’ in this sense is often referred to as the **orthographic word** (for writing) or the **phonological word** (for speech). A neutral term often used to subsume both is **word form**.

(b) There is a more abstract sense, referring to the common factor underlying the set of forms which are plainly VARIANTS of the same unit, such as *walk*, *walks*, *walking*, *walked*. The ‘underlying’ word unit is often referred to as a LEXEME. Lexemes are the units of VOCABULARY, and as such would be listed in a dictionary.

(c) This then leaves the need for a comparably abstract unit to be set up to show how words work in the GRAMMAR of a language, and ‘word’, without qualification, is usually reserved for this role (alternatively, one may spell out this implication, referring to ‘MORPHEMIC/MORPHOSYNTACTIC/GRAMMATICAL’ words, though the latter has an alternative sense). A word, then, is a grammatical unit, of the same theoretical kind as MORPHEME and SENTENCE. In a HIERARCHICAL model of analysis, sentences (clauses, etc.) consist of words, and words consist of morphemes (minimally, one free morpheme). **Word-order** refers to the sequential arrangement of words in a language. Languages are sometimes classified in terms of whether their word-order is relatively ‘free’ (as in Latin) or ‘fixed’ (as in English).

Several criteria have been suggested for the identification of words in speech (criteria which would also apply to the written language as well, if they were needed). One is that words are the most stable of all linguistic units, in respect of their internal structure, i.e. the CONSTITUENT parts of a complex word have little potential for rearrangement, compared with the relative POSITIONAL MOBILITY of the constituents of sentences and other grammatical structures (cf. *disestablishment*, where the sequence of *dis-establish-ment* is fixed, and *all boys like girls*, where many alternative sequences are possible, e.g. *boys all like girls*). A second criterion refers to the relative ‘uninterruptibility’ or COHESIVENESS of words, i.e. new elements (including pauses) cannot usually be inserted within them in normal speech: pauses, by contrast, are always potentially present at word boundaries. A criterion which has influenced linguists’ views of the word since it was first suggested by Leonard Bloomfield (see BLOOMFIELDIAN) is the definition of word as a ‘minimal free form’, i.e. the smallest unit which can constitute, by itself, a complete utterance (it contrasts here with sentence, seen as the maximal free form recognized by most grammars). On this basis, *possibility* is a word, as is *possible* (contexts could be constructed which would enable such units to occur as single-element sentences, e.g. *Is that a probable outcome? Possible.*), but *-ity* is not (nor would any AFFIX be). Not all word-like units satisfy this criterion, however (e.g. *a* and *the* in English), and how to handle these has been the subject of considerable discussion.

Several general subclassifications of words have been proposed, such as the distinction between VARIABLE and invariable types, GRAMMATICAL (or FUNCTION) words *v.* LEXICAL words, CLOSED-CLASS *v.* OPEN-CLASS words, EMPTY *v.* FULL words. At a more specific level, **word-classes** can be established, by analysing the various GRAMMATICAL, SEMANTIC and PHONOLOGICAL properties displayed by the words in a language, and grouping words into classes on the basis of formal similarities (e.g. their INFLECTIONS and DISTRIBUTION). The results are analogous to the traditional notion of ‘parts of speech’, but word-classes usually display a wider range of more precisely defined classes, e.g. PARTICLES, AUXILIARIES, etc., alongside NOUNS, VERBS, etc., and lack the vagueness of many of the traditional NOTIONAL definitions (e.g. a noun as the ‘name of a person, place or thing’). The study of the structure and composition of words (see WORD-FORMATION) is carried on by MORPHOLOGY. The study of the ARRANGEMENTS of words in sentences is the province of SYNTAX. The notion of ‘PROSODIC word’ is central to some theories of phonological structure, as is the notion of a ‘MINIMAL word’ (one which contains at least two MORAS/SYLLABLES).

**word accent** see ACCENT (2)

**word and paradigm (WP)** A MORPHOLOGICAL MODEL of description which sees the WORD as the basic UNIT of analysis, operating within a set of variables which constitute a PARADIGM. This is the traditional model of description, as illustrated from Latin GRAMMARS (e.g. *amo, amas, amat . . .* constitutes the paradigm of the LEXEME *amo*). WP is seen as a major alternative to the two other main approaches to morphological analysis: ITEM AND PROCESS and ITEM AND ARRANGEMENT. In contrast to the traditional use of paradigms in LANGUAGE study, linguistics does not arbitrarily choose one form of a word (the ‘leading form’) as given, and derive the rest of the paradigm from this (the student usually learning it by rote); rather, the aim is to define a common factor (a ROOT or STEM) within the paradigm, neutral with respect to the variant forms of the paradigm, and to derive the VARIANT forms from this, e.g. using rules.

**word-based morphology** see MORPHOLOGY

**word-class** (*n.*) see CLASS, WORD

**word-ending** (*n.*) see INFLECTION

**word-formation** (*n.*) In its most general sense, the term refers to the whole process of MORPHOLOGICAL variation in the constitution of WORDS, i.e. including the two main divisions of INFLECTION (word variations signalling GRAMMATICAL relationships) and DERIVATION (word variations signalling LEXICAL relationships). In a more restricted sense, word-formation refers to the latter processes only, these being subclassified into such types as ‘compositional’ or ‘compound’ (e.g. *black bird* from the free elements *black + bird*), and ‘derivational’ (e.g. *national, nationalize*, etc., from the addition of the bound elements *-al, -ize*, etc.). Several possibilities of further subclassification are available in the literature on this subject. In GENERATIVE grammar, **word-formation rules (WFR)** specify how to form one class of words out of another.

**word grammar (WG)** A GRAMMATICAL theory which claims that grammatical knowledge is largely a body of knowledge about WORDS. It regards DEPENDENCY as the central relation in grammar, and assumes that CONSTITUENCY is only important in connection with CO-ORDINATE structures.

**word-order** (*n.*) A term used in GRAMMATICAL analysis to refer to the SEQUENTIAL arrangement of WORDS in larger linguistic UNITS. Some LANGUAGES (e.g. English) rely on word-order as a means of expressing grammatical relationships within CONSTRUCTIONS; in others (e.g. Latin) word-order is more flexible, as grammatical relations are signalled by INFLECTIONS. In later GENERATIVE linguistics, languages with fairly fixed word-order are called CONFIGURATIONAL LANGUAGES; those with fairly free word-order are NON-CONFIGURATIONAL LANGUAGES.

**word stress** see STRESS

**w-star languages** see NON-CONFIGURATIONAL LANGUAGES

**wugs** (*n.*) A nonsense word invented in the late 1950s for a LANGUAGE ACQUISITION experiment into the learning of MORPHOLOGY. The drawing of a mythical animal (a *wug*) was presented to children, and the child was told: 'This is a wug'. Then the experimenter would point to a second picture, saying 'Now, there's another one. There are two of them. There are two - .' If the children had learned the plural ending, they would say *wugs*; if they had not, they would say *wug*. Using several such NONSENSE words in a range of morphological CONTEXTS, much basic information was obtained concerning the order and timing of the acquisition of GRAMMATICAL MORPHEMES.