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## Linguistic Features

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When attempting to model and to understand the complexity of natural language, linguists typically have recourse to features. At the simplest level, features are used to factor out common properties. We can recognize a feature NUMBER, with the value 'plural,' as present in forms like *books, loaves, men, oxen*. Using a feature captures the idea that the plural items are in some sense the same (for example, for agreement purposes, since all take *these* rather than

*this*) even though number is realized differently. Other examples include TENSE (present, past, etc.) and PERSON (1st, 2nd, 3rd). Features show consistency across entities, and to some extent across languages. They have proved invaluable for analysis and description, and have a major role in contemporary linguistics, from the most abstract theorizing to the most applied computational work. Our examples have been of morphosyntactic features. Features may also be phonological (specifying, for example, the height or backness of a vowel), morphological (specifying the inflectional class of an item), syntactic (for syntactic categories such as V or N) or semantic (such as ANIMACY).

The notion of feature emerged in discussions on the nature of the phoneme, particularly by Trubetzkoy and Jakobson, and this research was crystallized in Jakobson *et al.* (1952). In the 1960s, features were given an important place in lexical semantics (Katz and Fodor, 1963), in syntax (Harman, 1963; Katz and Postal, 1964; and Chomsky, 1965) and in morphology (Matthews, 1965). A major development was Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar (Gazdar *et al.*, 1985), which brought together the linguistic work of Stockwell, Schachter, and Partee with the formal work of Martin Kay in an attempt at a fully articulated theory of features.

In subsequent years, features have taken on an even greater role, yet conceptualization has lagged behind. The notion of default has been employed widely in linguistics, but with varying interpretations (distinguished in formal terms in Fraser and Corbett, 1997). In Lexical Functional Grammar and Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar, work on unification is central to the use of features. In Government and Binding Theory and Minimalism, the notion of checking performs a similar but significantly different role (see, for example, Chomsky, 2000). Even though the theoretical machinery available has been extended by the introduction of typed feature structures (see Carpenter, 1992), we still lack a convincing account for some basic phenomena. However, there are encouraging moves to bring formal accuracy together with a range of interesting data, to bring us closer to an adequate theory of linguistic features.

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See also: Case; Feature Organization; Gender; Number; Tense.

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## Linguistic Habitus

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Pierre Bourdieu's (1981) concept of habitus denotes a modality, which enables the individual to act routinely as well as creatively and innovatively. Central to Bourdieu's theory is the attempt to describe the dynamic relationships between the structural conditions of an individual existence, the individual's

activities as a product of socialization under these conditions and the open-ended yet strictly limited capacity of the individual for action. In the process of socialization (see **Socialization**), a system of permanent dispositions is created in the individual, including sensitivity as one prerequisite for personal development. This system of dispositions and sensitivity is a necessary precondition for successful social activity.

Bourdieu emphasizes a circularity between 'structure,' 'habitus,' and 'practice.' Habitus functions as an awareness-matrix, an action-matrix, and a