

# MORE BASIC QUESTIONS OF LINGUISTICS

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In the spring of 1970, the Cornell linguistics faculty prepared a list of basic questions that graduate students could use as a guide for reading and study. Finding it incomplete, Prof. Charles Elliott prepared the following supplementary list:

- What is language?
- What was the first language and how did it develop into all others?
- Who was its first speaker?
- What is Dutch?
- Give four reasons for Hungarian; include 'isogloss' in your answer.
- Show (cleverly) how discourse analysis is related to palmistry.
- Assume you are conducting field work in the Amazon Basin and are in the process of eliciting words for poisonous plants. Suddenly, your informant falls to her knees and viciously bites your calf. What do you do? ( You have a ball-point pen.)
- The relationship between physical chemistry and sociolinguistics is seldom discussed. What excuse is most often given? What is the real reason?
- Some investigators use a special set of symbols for 'writing down' the sounds of a language. Why is this called 'transcription'?
- What is the most ordinary language you can think of? How does it compare to Sanskrit?
- To what extent can we say that context plays a part in events? Why do we say this?
- There is much discussion currently about syntax. Discuss phonology.
- How does a language become synchronic?
- Those afflicted with glottochronology must be treated before they are completely incapacitated. What are its classical symptoms?
- Why is there so much embedding going on these days?
- Distinguish between conjunction and insubordination.
- How can reduplication be drastically reduced (perhaps stopped altogether)?
- Discuss language change. Show, in particular, and in some detail, how you would go about changing French.
- You have been asked to address a congress of Persian ornithologists. What would you tell them about morphology? Relativization?