

Language

Language, our spoken, written, or gestured work, is the way we communicate meaning to ourselves and others.



Language transmits culture

Language Structure

Phonemes: The smallest distinct sound unit in a spoken language. For example:

bat, has three phonemes *b · a · t*
chat, has three phonemes *ch · a · t*

English language has about 40
All languages combined have close to 900

Language Structure

Morpheme: The smallest unit that carries a meaning. It may be a word or part of a word. For example:

Milk = *milk*

Pumpkin = *pump . kin*

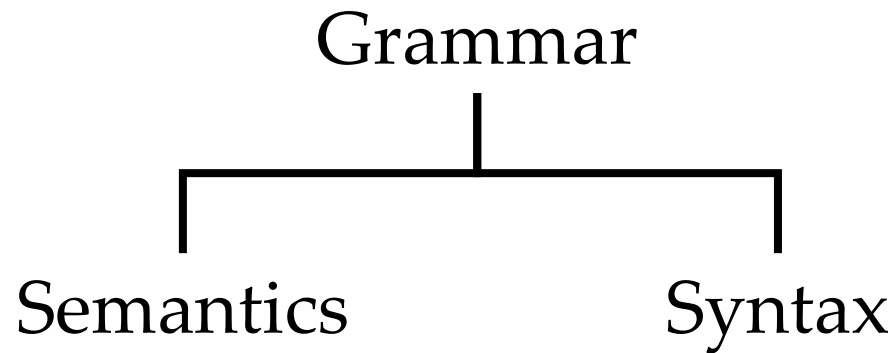
Unforgettable = *un . for . get . table*

Structuring Language

Phonemes	Basic sounds (about 40) ... <i>ea, sh.</i>
Morphemes	Smallest meaningful units (100,000) ... <i>un, for.</i>
Words	Meaningful units (290,500) ... <i>meat, pumpkin.</i>
Phrase	Composed of two or more words (326,000) ... <i>meat eater.</i>
Sentence	Composed of many words (infinite) ... <i>She opened the jewelry box.</i>

Grammar

Grammar is the system of rules in a language that enable us to communicate with and understand others.



Semantics

Semantics is the **set of rules** by which we derive meaning from morphemes, words, and sentences. For example:

Semantic rule tells us that adding –
ed to the word *laugh* means that it
happened in the past.

Syntax

Syntax = ORDER of words; consists of the rules for combining words into **grammatically sensible sentences**. For example:

In English, syntactical rule says that adjectives come before nouns; *white house*. In Spanish, it is reversed; *casa blanca*.

When do we learn language?

Babbling Stage:

Beginning at 4 months, the infant spontaneously utters various sounds, like *ah-goo*. Babbling is not imitation of adult speech.



When do we learn language?

- **One-Word Stage**: Beginning at or around his first birthday, a child starts to speak one word at a time and is able to make family members understand him. The word doggy may mean look at the dog out there.



When do we learn language?

Two-Word Stage: Before the 2nd year, a child starts to speak in two-word sentences. This form of speech is called telegraphic speech because the child speaks like a telegram: “Go car,” means *I would like to go for a ride in the car*



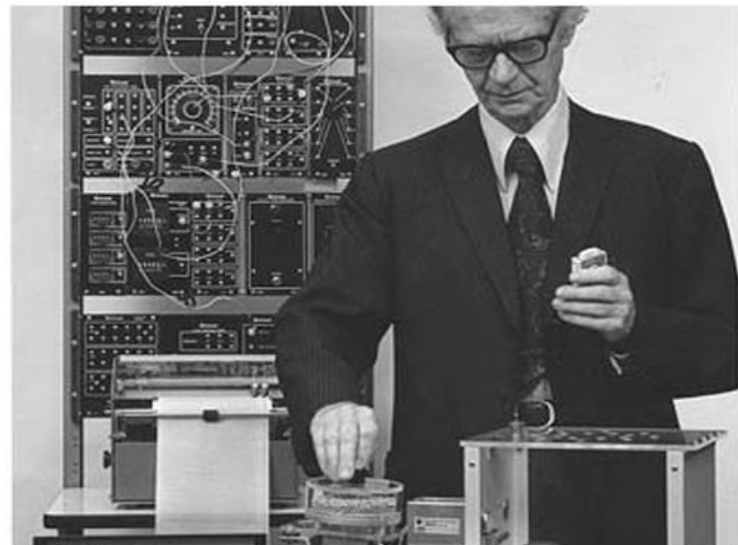
When do we learn language?

Longer phrases: After telegraphic speech, children begin uttering longer phrases (i.e. *Mommy get ball*) with syntactical sense, and by early elementary school they are employing humor.

You never starve in the desert because of all the sand-which-is there.

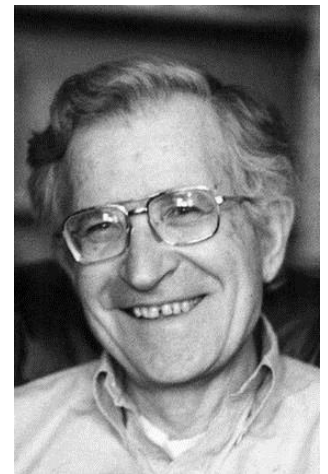
Explaining Language Development

1. Operant Learning: Skinner (1957, 1985) believed that language development may be explained on the basis of learning principles such as association, imitation, and reinforcement.



Explaining Language Development

2. Inborn Universal Grammar: Chomsky (1959, 1987) opposed Skinner's ideas and suggested that the rate of language acquisition is so fast that it cannot be explained through learning principles, and thus most of it is inborn. Deep structure – wording a sentence different, but keeping its meaning. E.G. – “I did the homework.” vs “The homework was done by me.”



Explaining Language Development

Childhood is a **critical period** for fully developing certain aspects of language. Children never exposed to any language (spoken or signed) by about age 7 gradually lose their ability to master any language.



Language Influences Thinking

Linguistic Determinism (Whorf Hypothesis):

Whorf (1956) suggested that language determines the way we think. For example, he noted that the Hopi people do not have the past tense for verbs. Therefore, the Hopi cannot think readily about the past.