

Chapter 5

A solid red horizontal bar spans the width of the slide, positioned below the chapter title and above the word 'Language'.

Language

Chapter Outline

- Origins and Development of Human Language
- Characteristics of Human Language
- Acquiring Language
- The Structure of Language
- Language and Culture
- Nonverbal Communication
- Language Change

Origin of Human Language: Hockett

- Hockett suggested that language evolved in two steps
 1. Blending occurred when human ancestors began to produce new calls by combining two old ones.
 2. In the duality of patterning stage, humans acquired the ability to produce arrangements of blended sounds.

Characteristics of Human Language

- Conventionality - The idea words are only arbitrarily or conventionally connected to the things for which they stand.
- Productivity - The idea that humans can combine words and sounds into new meaningful utterances they have never before heard
- Displacement - The capacity of human languages to describe things not happening in the present.

Acquiring Language

- Humans would speak no language if they were taught none.
- Humans may have a predisposition for learning language patterns or rules.
- The human brain and body are biologically adapted for language.

The Structure of Language

- The study of the structure and content of specific languages is called descriptive or structural linguistics.
- These linguists assume that language can be separated from other aspects of culture and studied without any direct reference to the social context in which speaking takes place.

The Structure of Language

- The structure of any language consists of four subsystems:
 1. phonology
 2. morphology
 3. syntax
 4. semantics

Phonology

- The sound system of a language.
- **Phone** - A sound made by humans and used in any language.
- **International Phonetic Alphabet** - A system of writing designed to represent all the sounds used in the different languages of the world.

Phonology

- **Phoneme** - The smallest significant unit of sound in a language.
- **Standard spoken American English** - The form of English spoken by most of the American middle class.
- **Allophones** - Two or more different phones that can be used to make the same phoneme in a specific language.

Morphology

- A system for creating words from sounds.
 - **Morpheme** - Smallest unit of a language that has a meaning.
 - **Bound morpheme** - A unit of meaning that must be associated with another.
 - **Free morpheme** - A unit of meaning that may stand alone as a word.
 - **Word** - The smallest part of a sentence that can be said alone and still retain its meaning.

Isolating Language

- A language with relatively few morphemes per word and fairly simple rules for combining them.

Agglutinating Language

- A language that allows a great number of morphemes per word and has highly regular rules for commingling them.

Synthetic Language

- A language that has words with a great many morphemes and complex highly irregular rules for their combination.

Syntax

- The part of grammar that has to do with the arrangement of words to form phrases and sentences.

Semantics: The Lexicon

- Semantics is the subsystem of a language that relates form to meaning.
- A lexicon is the total stock of words in a language.

Sociolinguistics

- Subdiscipline of anthropology that focuses on speech performance.
- Sociolinguists attempt to identify, describe, and understand the cultural patterning of different speech events within a community.
- They are interested in how speech varies depending on a person's position in a social structure or relationship.

Question

- Which of the following research projects would be an example of a sociolinguistic study?
 - a) collecting terms for plants and animals in a collaborative project with native speakers of a language in Papua New Guinea
 - b) recording details of the phonology of an hitherto unknown language
 - c) looking at the way in which a person speaks in different contexts, e.g. a dinner party or at a sports event
 - d) collecting the kinship terms used by an indigenous tribe

Answer: c

- The following research project is an example of a sociolinguistic study:
 - **Looking at the way in which a person speaks in different contexts, e.g. a dinner party or at a sports event.**

Languages and Dialects

- Grammatical constructions used by the socially dominant group are considered to be a language, and deviations from them are often called dialects.
- **Pidgin** - A language of contact and trade composed of features of the original languages of two or more societies.
- **Creole** - A first language that is composed of elements of two or more different languages.

African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

- A form of English spoken by many African Americans particularly those of rural or urban working class backgrounds.
- Also known as Ebonics or Black English Vernacular (BEV), AAVE has deep roots in the African-American community.

Code Switching

- The ability of speakers of two (or more) languages to move seamlessly between them.

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

- Perceptions and understandings of time, space, and matter are conditioned by the structure of a language.

Question

- Which of the following does **not** reflect the ideas about language and thought put forward by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf?
 - a) Time and space are experienced differently by people who have different languages.
 - b) Language and culture are closely intertwined.
 - c) A lack of gender classes for nouns in a language corresponds with the equality of men and women in the society.
 - d) The structure of our language shapes our perceptions of the world.

Answer: c

- The following does **not** reflect the ideas about language and thought put forward by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf:
 - **A lack of gender classes for nouns in a language corresponds with the equality of men and women in the society.**

Nonverbal Communication

- Almost two-thirds of communication comes from nonverbal cues.
- Messages are sent by clothing, jewelry, tattoos, piercings, and body modifications.

Nonverbal Communication

- **Haptics** is the study and analysis of touch.
- **Chronemics** is the study of the different ways that cultures understand time and use it to communicate.
- **Proxemics** is the study of the ways in which different cultures use space.
- **Kenesics** is the study of body movement, facial expressions, and gaze.

Historical Linguistics

- Focused on discovering the history of languages.
- Vocabularies are constantly changing.
- Sociolinguists are interested in the social factors that affect changes in languages.

The Great Vowel Shift

Middle English Vowel	Modern English Vowel	Middle English Word	Rhymed with	Became
i	aj	mis	piece	mice
u	aw	mus	moose	mouse
e	i	ges	place	geese
o	u	gos	close	goose
a	e	name	comma	name

Comparative Linguistics

- Documenting relationships between languages and grouping them into language families.
- **Core vocabulary** - A list of 100 or 200 terms that designate things, actions, and activities, likely to be named in all languages.
- **Glottochronology** - Statistical technique that linguists developed to estimate the date of separation of related languages.

Quick Quiz



1. A message conveyed that affects the behavior of another organism is an instance of

- a) language.
- b) a signal.
- c) thought.
- d) communication.
- e) electrical conduction.

Answer: d

- A message conveyed that affects the behavior of another organism is an instance of **communication**.

2. The ability to put together combinations or series of words from a limited set of recognized sound units is one of the characteristics of human language, referred to as
 - a) productivity.
 - b) a closed system.
 - c) limited to repetition of learned phrases.
 - d) repetitive.
 - e) multilinear.

Answer: a

- The ability to put together combinations or series of words from a limited set of recognized sound units is one of the characteristics of human language, referred to as **productivity**.

3. Several hundred sounds, known as _____, found within human languages are included in the International Phonetic Alphabet IPA.

- a) phonetics
- b) phones
- c) phonemes
- d) words
- e) phonology

Answer: b

- Several hundred sounds, known as **phones**, found within human languages are included in the International Phonetic Alphabet IPA.

4. Some historical linguists examine historical relationships between languages using a statistical technique called
 - a) alphabetizing.
 - b) glottochronology.
 - c) universal grammar.
 - d) the "great vowel shift."
 - e) chronemics.

Answer: b

- Some historical linguists examine historical relationships between languages using a statistical technique called **glottochronology**.