

The National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

**FIRST STEPS IN LINGUISTICS.
HUMAN LANGUAGE**

Reference Book in *Introduction to Linguistics*
Course for Bachelor Program Students

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The National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

First Steps in Linguistics. Human Language. Reference Book in *Introduction to Linguistics* Course for Bachelor Program Students

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Перші кроки в лінгвістиці. Посібник з курсу «Вступ до мовознавства» для студентів бакалаврату

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Навчальний посібник «First Steps in Linguistics. Human Language. Reference Book in *Introduction to Linguistics* Course for Bachelor Program Students» призначений для студентів-бакалаврів освітньої програми «Англійська мова та українська мова». У ньому розглядаються базові питання про мову людства, а саме теорії походження мови, її класифікації, категоріальні особливості людської мови та різні форми комунікації. Аналізуються різні дефініції мови. Матеріали слугують додатковим ресурсом до курсу та допоможуть студентам-філологам систематизувати знання та сформувати цілісне уявлення про природу мови.

Кожен розділ посібника складається з короткого теоретичного огляду, практичних завдань, та питань для самоперевірки, обговорення та подальших досліджень. Укладено згідно з програмою нормативної навчальної дисципліни «Вступ до мовознавства».

Розрахований для використання під час аудиторної та самостійної роботи студентів.

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PREFACE

Language is one of the defining characteristics of human existence. It shapes our thoughts, connects societies, and serves as the foundation for culture, science, and progress. The study of language – its origin, structures, and functions – has long been a central pursuit of linguistics. This reference book is designed as an introductory resource for students exploring the fundamentals of human language, covering its origins, classifications, distribution, design features, and modes of communication.

The origin of language remains one of the most intriguing questions in human history. Scholars have proposed numerous theories, ranging from biological evolution to social necessity, in an attempt to explain the cognitive and physiological mechanisms that enable speech and communication and how linguistic ability emerged.

Language classification plays a crucial role in understanding the diversity of human languages. Linguists group languages based on genetic relationships, structural similarities, and geographical distribution. The world's languages belong to various language families; typological classifications focus on grammatical structures, while areal classifications consider linguistic influence due to geographical location and historical contact.

The vast number of languages spoken worldwide, estimated at over 7,000, reflects humanity's rich linguistic diversity. Documenting and preserving languages, especially those becoming endangered or with few remaining speakers, is a significant concern in contemporary linguistics.

The study of language is conducted within the field of linguistics. Contrary to popular belief, linguists are not necessarily polyglots – individuals fluent in many languages. Instead, their primary interest is the scientific study of language. Linguists analyze the structure of language: how speakers create meaning through combinations of sounds, words, and sentences that ultimately result in various texts (e.g. a conversation between friends, a public speech, a lecture, negotiations, a

report, or an article in a newspaper). A linguist is a person who is professionally engaged in the scientific study of some aspect of language (i.e. of one particular language or of several languages or of human language in general). Like other scientists, linguists examine their subject matter – language – objectively. They are not supposed to evaluate the usage of language as “good” versus “bad”. The goal of the linguist is to describe language that is different from the goal of the official, teacher, or writer: to prescribe language usage, telling people how they should or should not speak or write.

Human Language reference book serves as a guide for students beginning their exploration of linguistics and encourages their reflection on a variety of perspectives in investigating language.

I. HUMAN LANGUAGE: DEFINITIONS

Language has been defined in numerous ways, reflecting its complexity and multifaceted nature. At its core, language is a system of communication that enables humans to convey thoughts, emotions, and ideas. However, definitions vary depending on the perspective taken. Structural linguists view language as a structured system of signs composed of sounds (or symbols) and meanings. Meanwhile, for cognitive linguists language is an innate mental capacity, and they highlight the role of language in shaping human thought. Other definitions focus on the social and functional aspects of language. Some scholars define language as a social institution that binds communities together facilitating cultural transmission and social interaction.

Let us examine and comment on the suggested definitions of human language from dictionaries one by one. It will help to understand the emphasis and the nuances each of them bring to the concept of language.

1. Oxford English Dictionary (OED)

"The method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way."

Explanation and Emphasis:

- This definition highlights *human communication* as central to language, emphasizing the structured and rule-governed nature of word use.
- It recognizes *spoken and written forms* as primary modes, focusing on the *conventionality* of how language operates.
- The emphasis on structure underscores the importance of grammar and syntax in forming meaningful communication.

2. Merriam-Webster Dictionary

"A systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings."

Explanation and Emphasis:

- This definition expands beyond spoken and written forms to include *gestures* and other signs, accommodating non-verbal communication.
- It focuses on the idea of *conventionalized systems*, meaning that the symbols used are agreed upon by a community.
- The inclusion of *ideas and feelings* highlights the expressive function of language.

3. American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

"A system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which humans communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas."

Explanation and Emphasis:

- The term *arbitrary vocal symbols* is key here, pointing to the fact that words often bear no natural connection to their meanings.
- This definition focuses on language as a tool for expressing *cognition* (thoughts) and *emotion* (feelings).
- The primary mode mentioned is *vocal*, emphasizing spoken communication over written or gestural forms.

TASK 1. Analyze the suggested dictionary definitions. Single out key-words and explain how they contribute to the general idea.

1. Britannica Dictionary

language, a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its

culture, express themselves. The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release.

2. Cambridge Dictionary

"A system of communication consisting of sounds, words, and grammar, or the system of communication used by people in a particular country or type of work."

3. Collins English Dictionary

"Language is a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols that are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing."

4. Random House Unabridged Dictionary

"A body of words and the systems for their use common to a people who are of the same community or nation, the same geographical area, or the same cultural tradition."

5. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

"A system of communication by written or spoken words, which is used by the people of a particular country or area."

6. Webster's New World College Dictionary

"The system of human expression by means of words, whether spoken or written."

TASK 2. Compare all the suggested dictionary definitions. Be ready to discuss what they have in common. Think of some limitations in these definitions, if any.

Alongside with dictionary definitions, there are also various ones given by different scholars. Read carefully the set below with approximate dates when these definitions were created or actively used:

1. Edward Sapir (1921):

"Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols."

From his book *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*.

2. Noam Chomsky (1957):

"A language is a set of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements."

From his seminal work *Syntactic Structures*.

3. Ferdinand de Saussure (1916):

"Language is a system of signs that express ideas and is therefore comparable to a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites, polite formulas, military signals, etc. It is the most important of these systems."

From *Course in General Linguistics*, published posthumously.

4. Leonard Bloomfield (1933):

"Language is a set of utterances, each utterance being an act of speech."

From *Language*.

5. M.A.K. Halliday (1978):

"Language is a social semiotic system. It is not only a means of communication but also a means of shaping and being shaped by culture and society."

From *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*.

6. David Crystal (1987):

"Language is the systematic, conventional use of sounds, signs, or written symbols in a human society for communication and self-expression."

From his book *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*.

7. Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956):

"Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about."

From *Language, Thought, and Reality*, a collection of his writings published posthumously.

8. Charles Hockett (1958):

"Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a

social group cooperates."

From *A Course in Modern Linguistics*.

9. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1836):

"Language is the infinite use of finite means."

From *On the Diversity of Human Language Construction*.

10. Roman Jakobson (1960):

"Language is an organized system of interrelated signs used for communication within a speech community."

Based on his studies on linguistic functions.

11. André Martinet (1960s):

"Language is a double-articulated system of communication where small units of meaning (morphemes) are combined to create words, and these words can form an infinite number of sentences."

Based on his work in structural linguistics.

12. George Yule (1996):

"Language is a system of communication which primarily uses sound, or gestures, to convey meaning and is unique to humans."

From *The Study of Language*.

13. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1950s):

"Language is a form of communication that operates as a structured system of symbols and is central to culture and human thought."

From his anthropological studies, especially in *Structural Anthropology*.

14. John Lyons (1977):

"Language is a conventional system of communication which is arbitrary and rule-governed, used by human beings in social interaction."

From *Semantics*.

15. Kenneth L. Pike (1967):

"Language is behavior which includes communication through auditory symbols and other related semiotic systems."

From *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*.

16. Michael Tomasello (2003):

"Language is a uniquely human cognitive skill that evolved to enable cooperation and cultural transmission within groups."

From *Constructing a Language: A Usage-Based Theory of Language Acquisition*.

17. Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine (2000):

"Language is a complex adaptive system that arises and changes as people use it to meet the communicative needs of their social environment."

From *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages*.

18. Dell Hymes (1972):

"Language is a system of rules that not only govern the structure of sentences but also their use in communication according to social norms."

From *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*.

19. Henry Sweet (1891):

"Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts."

From *A New English Grammar, Logical and Historical*.

20. Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager (1942)

"A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates."

TASK 3. Choose some definition(s) and research basic information about the linguist(s). Analyze the chosen scholar definition. Single out key-words and explain how they contribute to the general idea. Take into account the historical and linguistic context.

TASK 4. Research and find one definition or a quote of human language by some writer/ poet/ psychologist/politician etc. Name the author. Explain the key ideas of this definition or a quote.

There are so many definitions of language because **language is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon**. Scholars from different disciplines, such as linguistics, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, and cognitive science, study it from various perspectives. Here are some reasons for the diversity of definitions:

1. Different Aspects of Language

Language is not just one thing. It has many layers, and scholars often focus on specific aspects:

- **Structure:** Linguists focus on grammar, syntax, and phonology (the "rules" of a language).

Example definition: "Language is a system of symbols and rules used for communication."

- **Social Role:** Sociolinguists emphasize how language connects people.

Example definition: "Language is a tool for creating and maintaining social relationships."

- **Cognitive Function:** Psychologists look at how language shapes thought and learning.

Example definition: "Language is a system that allows humans to think and communicate abstract ideas."

2. Different Goals of Study

The purpose of defining language often depends on the researcher's goal:

- **Scientific Goals:** Linguists might define language in a way that helps describe or analyze its structure.
- **Practical Goals:** Teachers or speech therapists might define language based on its use in communication or learning.

- **Philosophical Goals:** Philosophers might define language as a way to explore the nature of meaning or human existence.

3. Language is Universal but Diverse

- Languages around the world are incredibly diverse in how they sound, how they are written, and how they are used.
- This diversity makes it hard to find a single definition that fits all languages.

For example, some languages use tones (like Mandarin), while others do not (like English). Some languages do not have a written form but are still full languages (like many indigenous languages).

4. Debate About What "Counts" as Language

There is disagreement among scholars about what qualifies as language:

- Is animal communication a type of language?
- Can mathematics or computer programming be called languages?
- Are sign languages equal to spoken languages?

These debates lead to different definitions depending on whether one includes or excludes certain types of communication.

5. Historical and Theoretical Influences

Throughout history, scholars have been influenced by the ideas of their time:

- Ancient Greeks like Aristotle defined language as a way to express thoughts.
- In the 20th century, structuralists like Ferdinand de Saussure emphasized language as a system of signs.

Although the approaches used to study and define human language can vary, it is possible to summarize common features.

- ✓ Most definitions highlight language as a *system* for communication, emphasizing structure, convention, and rule-governed behavior.
- ✓ Analyzing modes of expression, some definitions focus solely on *spoken and written* forms, while others include *gestural and symbolic* systems.

- ✓ Many linguists stress the role of language in uniting specific groups, nations, or regions, linking it to *identity and tradition*.
- ✓ Definitions emphasize language's purpose in expressing *thoughts, feelings, and ideas*, with varying degrees of focus on practicality (e.g., "used by people in work").

There are so many definitions of language because it is not just one thing. It is a **system**, a **tool**, a **social activity**, and even a way to understand what it means to be human. Different scholars and cultures focus on different aspects of language, which leads to a variety of perspectives and definitions. This diversity makes the study of language rich and fascinating.

II. HUMAN LANGUAGE: THE ORIGIN

1. The Divine Source

In the biblical tradition, as described in the book of Genesis, God created Adam and “whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.” Alternatively, following a Hindu tradition, language came from Sarasvati, wife of Brahma, creator of the universe. In most religions, there appears to be a divine source who provides humans with language. In an attempt to rediscover this original divine language, a few experiments have been carried out, with rather conflicting results. The basic hypothesis seems to have been that, if human infants were allowed to grow up without hearing any language around them, then they would spontaneously begin using the original God-given language.

The Greek writer Herodotus reported the story of an Egyptian pharaoh named Psammetichus (or Psamtik) who tried the experiment with two newborn babies more than 2,500 years ago. After two years of isolation except for the company of goats and a mute shepherd, the children were reported to have spontaneously uttered, not an Egyptian word, but something that was identified as the Phrygian word *bekos*, meaning “bread.” The pharaoh concluded that Phrygian, an older language spoken in part of what is modern Turkey, must be the original language. That seems very unlikely. The children may not have picked up this “word” from any human source, but as several commentators have pointed out, they must have heard what the goats were saying. (First remove the *-kos* ending, which was added in the Greek version of the story, then pronounce *be-* as you would the English word *bed* without *-d* at the end. Can you hear a goat?)

King James the Fourth of Scotland carried out a similar experiment around the year 1500 and the children were reported to have spontaneously started speaking Hebrew, confirming the king’s belief that Hebrew had indeed been the language of the Garden of Eden. It is unfortunate that all other cases of children who have been discovered living in isolation, without coming into contact with human speech, tend not to confirm the results of these types of divine-source experiments. Very young

children living without access to human language in their early years grow up with no language at all. This was true of Victor, the wild boy of Aveyron in France, discovered near the end of the eighteenth century, and also of Genie, an American feral child whose special life circumstances came to light in the 1970s. From this type of evidence, there is no “spontaneous” language. If human language did emanate from a divine source, we have no way of reconstructing that original language, especially given the events in a place called Babel, “because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth,” as described in Genesis (11: 9).

2. The Natural Sound Source

A quite different view of the beginnings of language is based on the concept of natural sounds. The human auditory system is already functioning before birth (at around seven months). That early processing capacity develops into an ability to identify sounds in the environment, allowing humans to make a connection between a sound and the thing producing that sound. This leads to the idea that primitive words derive from imitations of the natural sounds that early men and women heard around them. Among several nicknames that he invented to talk about the origins of speech, Jespersen (1922) called this idea the “bow-wow” theory.

The “bow-wow” theory

In this scenario, when different objects flew by, making a Caw-Caw or Coo-Coo sound, the early human tried to imitate the sounds and then used them to refer to those objects even when they were not present. The fact that all modern languages have some words with pronunciations that seem to echo naturally occurring sounds could be used to support this theory. In English, in addition to *cuckoo*, we have *splash*, *bang*, *boom*, *rattle*, *buzz*, *hiss*, *screech*, and of course *bow-wow*.

Words that sound similar to the noises they describe are examples of **onomatopoeia**. While it is true that a number of words in any language are onomatopoeic, it is hard to see how most of the soundless things (e.g. “low branch”)

as well as abstract concepts (e.g. “truth”) could have been referred to in a language that simply echoed natural sounds. We might also be rather skeptical about a view that seems to assume that a language is only a set of words used as “names” for things.

The “pooh-pooh” theory

Another of Jespersen’s nicknames was the “pooh-pooh” theory, which proposed that speech developed from the instinctive sounds people make in emotional circumstances. That is, the original sounds of language may have come from natural cries of emotion such as pain, anger and joy. By this route, presumably, *Ouch!* came to have its painful connotations. But *Ouch!* and other interjections such as *Ah!*, *Ooh!*, *Phew!*, *Wow!* or *Yuck!* are usually produced with sudden intakes of breath, which is the opposite of ordinary talk. We normally produce spoken language as we breathe out, so we speak while we exhale, not inhale. In other words, the expressive noises people make in emotional reactions contain sounds that are not otherwise used in speech production and consequently would seem to be rather unlikely candidates as source sounds for language.

3. The Social Interaction Source

Another proposal involving natural sounds was nicknamed the “yo-he-ho” theory. The idea is that the sounds of a person involved in physical effort could be the source of our language, especially when that physical effort involved several people and the interaction had to be coordinated. So, a group of early humans might develop a set of hums, grunts, groans and curses that were used when they were lifting and carrying large bits of trees or lifeless hairy mammoths.

The appeal of this proposal is that it places the development of human language in a social context. Early people must have lived in groups, if only because larger groups offered better protection from attack. Groups are necessarily social organizations and, to maintain those organizations, some form of communication is

required, even if it is just grunts and curses. So, human sounds, no matter how they were produced must have had some principled use within the life and social interaction of early human groups. This is an important idea that may relate to the uses of humanly produced sounds. It does not, however, answer our question regarding the origins of the sounds produced. Apes and other primates live in social groups and use grunts and social calls, but they do not seem to have developed the capacity for speech.

4. The Physical Adaptation Source

Instead of looking at types of sounds as the source of human speech, we can look at the types of physical features humans possess, especially those that are distinct from other creatures, which may have been able to support speech production. We can start with the observation that, at some early stage, our ancestors made a very significant transition to an upright posture, with bi-pedal (on two feet) locomotion, and a revised role for the front limbs.

Some effects of this type of change can be seen in physical differences between the skull of a gorilla and that of a Neanderthal man from around 60,000 years ago. The reconstructed vocal tract of a Neanderthal suggests that some consonant-like sound distinctions would have been possible. We have to wait until about 35,000 years ago for features in reconstructions of fossilized skeletal structures that begin to resemble those of modern humans. In the study of evolutionary development, there are certain physical features, best thought of as partial adaptations, which appear to be relevant for speech. They are streamlined versions of features found in other primates. By themselves, such features would not guarantee speech, but they are good clues that a creature with such features probably has the capacity for speech.

Teeth and lips

Human teeth are upright, not slanting outwards like those of apes, and they are roughly even in height. Such characteristics are not very useful for ripping or tearing food and seem better adapted for grinding and chewing. They are also very helpful in making sounds such as *f* or *v*. Human lips have much more intricate muscle interlacing than is found in other primates and their resulting flexibility certainly helps in making sounds like *p*, *b* and *m*. In fact, the *b* and *m* sounds are the most widely attested in the vocalizations made by human infants during their first year, no matter which language their parents are using.

Mouth and tongue

The human mouth is relatively small compared to other primates and can be opened and closed rapidly. It is also part of an extended vocal tract that has much more of an L-shape than the fairly straight path from front to back in other mammals. In contrast to the fairly thin flat tongue of other large primates, humans have a shorter, thicker and more muscular tongue that can be used to shape a wide variety of sounds inside the oral cavity. In addition, unlike other primates, humans can close off the airway through the nose to create more air pressure in the mouth. The overall effect of these small differences taken together is a face with more intricate muscle interlacing in the lips and mouth, capable of a wider range of shapes and a more rapid and powerful delivery of sounds produced through these different shapes.

Larynx and pharynx

The human larynx or “voice box” (containing the vocal folds or vocal cords) differs significantly in position from the larynx of other primates such as monkeys. In the course of human physical development, the assumption of an upright posture moved the head more directly above the spinal column and the larynx dropped to a lower position. This created a longer cavity called the pharynx, above the vocal folds, which acts as a resonator for increased range and clarity of the sounds produced via the larynx and the vocal tract. Other primates have almost no pharynx. One unfortunate consequence of this development is that the lower position of the human larynx

makes it much more possible for the human to choke on pieces of food. Monkeys may not be able to use their larynx to produce speech sounds, but they do not suffer from the problem of getting food stuck in their windpipe. In evolutionary terms, there must have been a big advantage in getting this extra vocal power (i.e. a larger range of sounds) to outweigh the potential disadvantage from an increased risk of choking to death.

5. The Tool-Making Source

In the physical adaptation view, one function (producing speech sounds) must have been superimposed on existing anatomical features (teeth, lips) previously used for other purposes (chewing, sucking). A similar development is believed to have taken place with human hands and some believe that manual gestures may have been a precursor of language. By about two million years ago, there is evidence that humans had developed preferential right-handedness and had become capable of making stone tools. Wood tools and composite tools eventually followed. Tool-making, or the outcome of manipulating objects and changing them using both hands, is evidence of a brain at work.

The human brain

The human brain is not only large relative to human body size, it is also lateralized, that is, it has specialized functions in each of the two hemispheres. Those functions that control the motor movements involved in complex vocalization (speaking) and object manipulation (making or using tools) are very close to each other in the left hemisphere of the brain. That is, the area of the motor cortex that controls the muscles of the arms and hands is next to the articulatory muscles of the face, jaw and tongue. It may be that there was an evolutionary connection between the language-using and tool-using abilities of humans and that both were involved in the development of the speaking brain. Most of the other speculative proposals concerning the origins of speech seem to be based on a picture of humans producing

single noises to indicate objects in their environment. This activity may indeed have been a crucial stage in the development of language, but what it lacks is any structural organization. All languages, including sign language, require the organizing and combining of sounds or signs in specific arrangements. We seem to have developed a part of our brain that specializes in making these arrangements.

If we think in terms of the most basic process involved in primitive tool-making, it is not enough to be able to grasp one rock (make one sound); the human must also be able to bring another rock (other sounds) into proper contact with the first in order to develop a tool. In terms of language structure, the human may have first developed a naming ability by producing a specific and consistent noise (e.g. *meat*) for a specific object. The crucial additional step was to bring another specific noise (e.g. *good*) into combination with the first to build a complex message (*meat good*). Several thousand years of development later, humans have honed this message-building capacity to a point where, on Saturdays, having a picnic with friends, they can enjoy the food and say *This meet is good*. As far as we know, other primates are not doing this.

6. The Genetic Source

We can think of the human baby in its first few years as a living example of some of these physical changes taking place. At birth, the baby's brain is only a quarter of its eventual weight and the larynx is much higher in the throat, allowing babies, like chimpanzees, to breathe and drink at the same time. In a relatively short period of time, the larynx descends, the brain develops, the child assumes an upright posture and starts walking and talking.

This almost automatic set of developments and the complexity of the young child's language have led some scholars to look for something more powerful than small physical adaptations of the species over time as the source of language. Even children who are born deaf (and do not develop speech) become fluent sign language users, given appropriate circumstances, very early in life. This seems to indicate that

human offspring are born with a special capacity for language. It is innate, no other creature seems to have it, and it is not tied to a specific variety of language. Is it possible that this language capacity is genetically hard-wired in the newborn human?

As a solution to the puzzle of the origins of language, **this innateness hypothesis** would seem to point to something in human genetics, possibly a crucial mutation, as the source. This would not have been a gradual change, but something that happened rather quickly. We are not sure when this proposed genetic change might have taken place or how it might relate to the physical adaptations described earlier. However, as we consider this hypothesis, we find our speculations about the origins of language moving away from fossil evidence or the physical source of basic human sounds toward analogies with how computers work (e.g. being pre-programmed or hard-wired) and concepts taken from the study of genetics. The investigation of the origins of language then turns into a search for the special “language gene” that only humans possess.

TASK 5. Research on “the Ding-Dong Theory” and “the La-La Theory”. Based on your findings and the text above, complete the suggested table.

	Core Idea	Strengths	Limitations
<i>The Bow-Wow Theory</i>			
<i>The Pooh-Pooh Theory</i>			
<i>The Ding-Dong Theory</i>			
<i>The Yo-He-Ho Theory</i>			
<i>The La-La Theory</i>			
<i>The Tool-Making Theory</i>			
<i>The Divine Source Theory</i>			

REVISION and DISCUSSION/ RESEARCH ISSUES

1. What do the experiments of Psammetichus and King James IV reveal about human assumptions regarding divine language? How reliable are their conclusions?
2. How does the evidence from feral children, like Victor and Genie, challenge the hypothesis that language is innate or divinely granted?
3. In the context of the Babel story, how might the concept of divine intervention in language diversity shape linguistic studies?
4. To what extent does onomatopoeia in modern languages support the “bow-wow” theory? What are the limitations of this theory in explaining abstract concepts?
5. Are there examples of sounds that might universally mimic natural noises across multiple languages? What does this suggest about the connection between sound and meaning?
6. The text suggests that language is not solely about naming things. What other functions of language might contradict the “bow-wow” theory?
7. How reasonable is it that instinctive cries like "Ouch!" or "Wow!" could evolve into complex language systems? What challenges does this theory face?
8. How does the “yo-he-ho” theory emphasize the social nature of early human life? Do you think language could have originated purely as a tool for group coordination, or were other factors equally important?
9. If primates like apes use grunts and calls in social groups, why might they have failed to develop complex speech like humans? What unique factors could have contributed to this difference?
10. The “Yo-He-Ho” theory explains how human sounds might have been used socially but does not address their origin. What additional evidence or ideas could help bridge this gap?

11. How might the necessity of social interaction and group coordination have influenced the evolution of language? Can language development be fully understood without considering its social function?
12. How do specific human physical adaptations, such as upright posture or changes in the vocal tract, support the capacity for speech? Are these adaptations sufficient to explain the emergence of language?
13. How do differences in teeth, lips, tongue, and vocal tract between humans and primates highlight the unique capacity of humans for speech? Could any of these features evolve independently without leading to language?
14. How credible is the idea that manual gestures were the precursors of spoken language? What evidence might support or contradict this theory?
15. Tool-making requires combining elements (e.g., rocks) in specific arrangements. How does this process parallel the organization of linguistic structures, and what does it suggest about the evolution of human communication?
16. Some primates are capable of basic tool use. Why might they not have developed linguistic capabilities parallel to humans despite this shared skill?
17. The text proposes that humans are born with a special, innate capacity for language. What evidence supports this innateness hypothesis, and how might it be tested further?
18. Deaf children develop fluency in sign language if exposed early. What does this phenomenon reveal about the role of innate abilities versus environmental exposure in language acquisition?
19. The genetic source theory suggests a sudden mutation led to language capacity. How might such a mutation have been advantageous for survival, and what implications does this have for our understanding of human evolution?
20. The analogy of language being “hard-wired” in humans likens it to pre-programming in computers. How useful is this comparison, and what might it oversimplify about the complexity of language and its origins?

Cross-Theory Questions

21. How might the genetic capacity for language have interacted with the physical adaptations described in the text above? Could one have influenced the other during the evolution of speech?
22. Both the tool-making and genetic theories highlight unique aspects of human development. How can we coordinate these theories with the social, physical, and natural sound theories to create a more comprehensive understanding of language origins?
23. How might the social interaction and physical adaptation theories complement one another? Could language have originated from a combination of social needs and physiological changes?
24. To what extent do physical adaptations for speech reflect the principle that evolutionary changes are often adaptations for specific functions? Could these adaptations have initially served other purposes before enabling language?
25. How important is it to consider both social interaction and physical adaptation together when theorizing about the origins of language? Are there other factors that should be included in such discussions?
26. How do the “divine source,” “bow-wow,” and “pooh-pooh” theories reflect different perspectives on the origins of language? Are these perspectives mutually exclusive, or could they be combined to form a more comprehensive explanation?

III. HUMAN LANGUAGE: MYTHS

Myths About Language Learning

Children learn languages more easily than adults.

While children acquire languages naturally in immersive environments, adults often excel in structured learning due to developed cognitive skills.

Immersion is the only effective way to learn a language.

Immersion helps but is not the only method. Structured instruction and practice are also highly effective, especially for mastering grammar and vocabulary.

You must have a 'language gene' or natural talent to learn a new language.

Research shows that anyone can learn a language with proper methods and consistent effort, though aptitude may vary.

Some languages are harder to learn than others.

Difficulty is relative, depending on a learner's native language and prior linguistic knowledge.

Myths About Language Use

Women talk more than men.

Studies show this isn't universally true; context, social roles, and cultural factors heavily influence who talks more.

Sign languages are the same worldwide.

Each sign language (e.g., American Sign Language vs. British Sign Language) is unique, with its own grammar, vocabulary, and cultural nuances.

Languages are dying because people are lazy.

Language shift often occurs due to social, economic, and political pressures, not individual laziness.

Using filler words (like 'um' and 'uh') is a sign of poor communication skills.

Filler words often serve important communicative functions, such as holding the floor or signaling hesitation.

Myths About Language Structure

Some languages have no grammar.

All languages have grammar; it's just that the rules may not align with those of more familiar languages.

There are primitive languages.

No language is inherently primitive. All languages are capable of complex and nuanced expression.

Languages are becoming simpler over time.

Languages evolve, but simplification in one area (e.g., loss of case systems) can be balanced by increased complexity in another (e.g., word order).

Eskimos have dozens (or hundreds) of words for snow.

This is an exaggeration of how Inuit languages describe snow in terms of its uses or qualities, not through unique 'words.'

Myths About Dialects and Accents

A dialect is just a corrupted form of a language.

Dialects are legitimate forms of language with their own rules and histories. Every standard language was once a dialect.

People with certain accents are less intelligent.

This is a harmful stereotype; accent reflects background, not intelligence or competence.

There's a 'correct' way to speak a language.

Standards exist for formal purposes, but language in practice is diverse, and all varieties are equally valid.

TASK 6. There exist more language myths. Research further and think of possible ways to debunk these myths.

1. People think differently depending on the language they speak.
2. Latin is the ancestor of all languages.

3. English has always been a global language.
4. Shakespeare invented thousands of words.
5. Writing is superior to speaking.
6. Children learn language solely by imitation.
7. Languages are “deteriorating” as they evolve (e.g., the loss of complex verb forms or the rise of slang).
8. Raising children bilingually delays their language development or confuses them.
9. Computers will soon replace human translators.
10. The first language ever was universal.
11. English is the most logical language.
12. People speak slower in rural areas.
13. Language is just a tool for communication and does not affect culture.

IV. LANGUAGE FAMILY

There is no precise figure as to the total number of languages spoken in the world today. Estimates vary between 5,000 and 7,000, and the accurate number depends partly on the arbitrary distinction between languages and dialects. Dialects (variants of the same language) reflect differences along regional and ethnic lines. In the case of English, most native speakers will agree that they are speakers of English even though differences in pronunciation, vocabulary and sentence structure clearly exist. English speakers from England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and United States of America will generally agree that they speak English, and this is also confirmed with the use of a standard written form of the language and a common literary heritage. However, there are many other cases in which speakers will not agree when the question of national identity and mutual intelligibility do not coincide.

The most common situation is when similar spoken language varieties are mutually understandable, but for political and historical reasons, they are regarded as different languages as in the case of Scandinavian languages. While Swedes, Danes and Norwegians can communicate with each other in most instances, each national group admits speaking a different language: Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic. There are other cases in which political, ethnic, religious, literary and other factors force a distinction between similar language varieties: Hindi vs. Urdu, Flemish vs. Dutch, Serbian vs. Croatian, Gallego vs. Portuguese, Xhosa vs Zulu. An opposite situation occurs when spoken language varieties are not mutually understood, but for political, historical or cultural motives, they are regarded as the same language as in the case of Lapp and Chinese dialects.

When a group of languages shares a common origin language, or a protolanguage, they can be considered a language family. Certain languages are related to each other. A language family is a group of different languages that all descend from a particular common language. The one language that generated those other languages in its family is known as a **protolanguage**.

Some languages do not come from a protolanguage. These are known as language isolates, and include languages, such as Basque, spoken by some in southwestern Europe, and Pirahã, spoken by the Pirahã people of the Brazilian Amazon. However, most languages spoken throughout the world belong to a language family.

For example, languages, such as Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Portuguese, and French, all belong to the language family known as *Romance languages*. The romance languages evolved from Latin, the language used in ancient Rome. The Latin word *Romanicus*, meaning “Roman,” was later shortened to “Romance,” which is where the language family name came from. Latin itself, however, evolved from the Indo-European language, an ancient protolanguage, which is the origin of most of the languages spoken in modern Europe and parts of Asia.

Other branches of the Indo-European language family have evolved into completely different groups. One example is the *Germanic languages*. Linguists generally describe Germanic languages in three groups: West Germanic, North Germanic, and East Germanic. The West Germanic group includes German, English, and Dutch. North Germanic includes Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic, and Faroese. East Germanic includes Gothic and the languages once spoken by members of peoples like the Vandals and the Burgundians. While the languages in the West Germanic and North Germanic groups are still spoken, those of the East Germanic group are now extinct.

Another important language family is *the Sino-Tibetan family*. It is the world’s second largest language family, with more than one billion speakers of its hundreds of different languages. It includes both the Sinitic languages (known as the Chinese dialects) and the Tibeto-Burman languages (such as Tibetan and Burmese). Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language in this family. Like many Sino-Tibetan languages, Mandarin Chinese is tonal. In tonal languages (which also include Thai and Hmong), the vocal pitch the speaker uses when saying a word helps determine its meaning.

Although the Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan language families two of the largest in the world, linguists have categorized more than one hundred language families around the globe. As linguists continue to study language and its origins, our understanding of language families will continue to evolve.

Language families around the world reflect centuries of geographic movement and interaction among different groups of people. The Indo-European family of languages, for example, represents nearly half of the world's population. The language family dominates nearly all of Europe, significant areas of Asia, including Russia and India, North and South America, Caribbean islands, Australia, New Zealand, and parts of South Africa. The Indo-European family of languages consists of various **language branches** (a collection of languages within a family with a common ancestral language) and numerous **language subgroups** (a collection of languages within a branch that share a common origin in the relative recent past and exhibit many similarities in vocabulary and grammar).

Language families are the building blocks of linguistic diversity. They group related languages, revealing shared histories and structural similarities. Understanding these families helps us trace human migration, cultural exchange, and the evolution of communication across the globe. From the widespread *Indo-European* to the geographically concentrated *Japonic*, each family has unique characteristics. These include morphological traits, phonological features, and syntactic structures. Studying these differences deepens our understanding of language diversity and human cognition.

INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGE BRANCHES AND LANGUAGE SUBGROUPS

Germanic Branch

Western Germanic Group (*Dutch, German, Frisian, English*)

Northern Germanic Group (*Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Faeroese*)

Romance Branch

French, Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Provençal, Romansh, Italian, Romanian

Slavic Branch

West Slavic Group (*Polish, Slovak, Czech, Sorbian*)

Eastern Slavic Group (*Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian*)

Southern Slavic Group (*Slovene, Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, Bulgarian*)

Celtic Branch

Britannic Group (*Breton, Welsh*)

Gaulish Group (*Irish Gaelic, Scots Gaelic*)

Baltic-Slavonic Branch

Latvian, Lithuanian

Hellenic Branch

Greek

Thracian-Illyrian Branch

Albanian

Armenian Branch

Armenian

Iranian Branch

Kurdish, Persian, Baluchi, Pashto, Tadzhik

Indo-Iranian (Indic) Branch

Northwestern Group (*Panjabi, Sindhi, Pahari, Dardic*)

Eastern Group (*Assamese, Bengali, Oriya*)

Midland Group (*Rajasthani, Hindi/Urdu, Bihari*)

West and Southwestern Group (*Gujarati, Marathi, Konda, Maldivian, Sinhalese*)

Other languages spoken in Europe, but not belonging to the Indo-European family are included in other families: Finno-Ugric, Altaic, and Basque. Some of the language branches listed above are represented by only one principal language (Albanian, Armenian, Basque, Greek), while others are spoken by diverse groups in

some geographic regions (Northern and Western Germanic languages, Western and Eastern Slavic languages, Midland and Southwestern Indian languages).

V. THE CLASSIFICATIONS OF LANGUAGES

Languages can be scientifically classified based on various criteria, each emphasizing different aspects of linguistic structure and history.

There are two kinds of classification of languages practiced in linguistics: **genetic (or genealogical) and typological**. The purpose of genetic classification is to group languages into families according to their degree of diachronic relatedness. They are usually classified according to membership in a language family (a group of related languages) which share common linguistic features (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar) and have evolved from a common ancestor (*proto-language*).

For example, within the Indo-European family, such subfamilies as Germanic or Celtic are recognized; these subfamilies comprise German, English, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and others, on the one hand, and Irish, Welsh, Breton, and others, on the other. So far, most of the languages of the world have been grouped only tentatively into families, and many of the classificatory schemes that have been proposed will no doubt be radically revised as further progress is made.

Languages can also be classified by the way they mark grammatical functions. **A typological classification** groups languages into types according to their structural characteristics. The most famous typological classification is that of isolating (analytic), agglutinating, and inflecting (or fusional) languages, which was frequently invoked in the 19th century in support of an evolutionary theory of language development.

Isolating languages are languages that primarily use single, unchanging morphemes to convey meaning, making them highly analytic in structure. These languages typically do not rely on inflectional changes to indicate grammatical relationships, which contrasts with synthetic languages that use affixes to modify meanings. The simplicity in their morphological structure allows for clear and direct expression of ideas without the complexities of complex word forms. Roughly

speaking, an isolating language is one in which all the words are morphologically unanalyzable (i.e., in which each word is composed of a single morph); for instance, Chinese and Vietnamese are highly isolating. In such languages, words usually consist of one morpheme (a linguistic unit that carries meaning), while in *synthetic languages*, they can consist of several morphemes.

Synthetic languages can be divided into agglutinative (agglutinating) and fusional (inflecting, inflective) languages. **An agglutinative language** is a type of language that forms words by combining a root with a series of affixes, each of which adds specific grammatical meaning. This structure allows for a clear segmentation of morphemes, making it easier to analyze the components of words. Agglutinative languages typically use a single morpheme for each grammatical function, which results in long, complex words that can convey detailed meanings. Turkish is a good example of an agglutinative language. The word *okullarımızda* means “in our schools” and consists of the following morphemes: okul (school), -lar (plural), -ımız(our) and -da (in). An agglutinating language (e.g., Finnish, Japanese, Korean) is one in which the word forms can be segmented into morphs, each of which represents a single grammatical category.

A fusional language is a type of language in which a single affix (like a prefix or suffix) can express multiple grammatical, syntactic, or semantic meanings simultaneously. In these languages, words often undergo morphological changes where one morpheme blends together different grammatical features, making it challenging to separate them into distinct components. This complexity leads to rich inflectional systems where a single form may convey tense, mood, number, and case all at once. In fusional languages, affixes can combine functions. In the Spanish word *habló* (“he spoke”), -ó simultaneously indicates both the past tense and a third person singular subject. English is mildly synthetic (it has inflections such as the plural suffix in *books*), while languages such as Latin have many inflections. Some languages such as Inuktitut (spoken by the Inuit) are sometimes called polysynthetic

because they use very many inflectional affixes, and one word in such languages can correspond to an entire sentence in other languages.

A fusional (inflecting) language is one in which there is no one-to-one correspondence between particular word segments and particular grammatical categories. The older Indo-European languages tend to be inflecting in this sense. For example, the Latin suffix *-is* represents the combination of categories “singular” and “genitive” in the word form *hominis* “of the man,” but one part of the suffix cannot be assigned to “singular” and another to “genitive,” and *-is* is only one of many suffixes that in different classes (or declensions) of words represent the combination of “singular” and “genitive.”

There are no clear-cut boundaries between these categories, however, and languages rarely fall perfectly into one category.

Comparison of Language Types: Fusional, Isolating, and Agglutinative

Language Type	Fusional	Isolating	Agglutinative
<i>Morpheme Structure</i>	Multiple grammatical features are blended into single affixes.	Mostly single morphemes with minimal modification.	Multiple affixes stacked onto a root word, each representing a single function.
<i>Affix Usage</i>	Fewer distinct affixes, but each can convey multiple meanings (e.g., tense and person).	No affixation, grammatical relationships indicated through word order.	Each affix represents a single grammatical function (e.g., tense, case).
<i>Morphological Simplicity</i>	More complex morphological patterns, including irregular forms.	Simple phonetic and morphological structure, no declensions or conjugations.	Simpler morphological structure compared to fusional languages, but with more complex word forms than

			isolating languages.
<i>Flexibility of Word Order</i>	Flexible word order due to inflectional systems indicating grammatical roles.	Rigid word order, as word position is crucial for meaning.	Word order flexibility due to clear morpheme boundaries.
<i>Grammar Structure</i>	Rich inflectional system allows for tense, person, number, etc., in one word.	Limited grammatical morphology; grammatical relationships are conveyed by word order.	Extensive use of affixes allows for rich morphological expression but with simpler affix rules.
<i>Declensions/Conjugations</i>	Highly inflected, with many irregular forms.	No extensive system of noun declensions or verb conjugations.	Clear system of affixes for noun declension and verb conjugation
<i>Learning Complexity</i>	More complex due to blended affixes and irregular forms.	Simpler grammar, making it easier to learn in terms of word structure.	Clearer analysis due to distinct morpheme boundaries, easier for morphological study.

SELF-CHECK QUESTIONS

1. What is the main principle behind typological classification?
2. Explain the difference between isolating and agglutinative languages in terms of their morphological structure.
3. Explain the difference between isolating and fusional languages in terms of their morphological structure.
4. Explain the difference between agglutinative and fusional languages in terms of their morphological structure.
5. How does an isolating language convey grammatical relationships without inflectional changes?

6. What are the key characteristics of an agglutinative language? Provide an example from the text.
7. How do fusional languages differ from agglutinative languages in their use of affixes?
8. What linguistic features make it difficult to separate morphemes in fusional languages?
9. Why is English considered only mildly synthetic compared to languages like Latin?
10. Explain the concept of polysynthetic languages with an example from the text.

TASK 7. Match the terms in Column A with the correct descriptions in Column B.

Column A	Column B
A. Agglutinative language	1. A type of language that primarily relies on single, unchanging morphemes for meaning
B. Morpheme	2. A language that uses many inflectional affixes, allowing a single word to represent an entire sentence
C. Polysynthetic language	3. A language that uses affixes to modify word meanings, including agglutinative and fusional types
D. Genetic classification	4. A classification method that organizes languages into families based on common ancestry
E. Indo-European languages	5. A group of related languages that evolved from a common ancestor
F. Typological classification	6. A language in which affixes express multiple grammatical meanings at once
G. Fusional language	7. A large language family that includes Germanic, Romance, and Slavic languages
H. Synthetic language	8. Groups languages based on structural characteristics

I. Isolating language	9. A language that forms words by combining a root with affixes, each representing a single grammatical function
J. Language family	10. The smallest unit of language that carries meaning

Languages can also be classified according to **sentence structure**, namely, by the most typical order of the subject (S), verb (V) and object (O) in declarative sentences such as “The cat chased the mouse”. There are six logically possible orders of the three elements S, O, and V:

SOV (“The cat the mouse chased”). This is the most common word order globally. Languages that typically use SOV order include Japanese, Korean, Turkish, Persian, and Hindi among others.

SVO (“The cat chased the mouse”). This is the second most common word order. Languages such as English, Mandarin Chinese, Indonesian, Swahili and others follow this pattern.

VSO (“chased the cat the mouse”). This order is less common but is found in languages like Classical Arabic, Biblical Hebrew, and Irish.

The rest of the patterns that put the object before the subject rare, and they are found in less than 5% of the world languages.

OSV (“The mouse the cat chased”),

OVS (“The mouse chased the cat”),

VOS (“Chased the mouse the cat”).

It is important to note that while languages may have a dominant or preferred word order, many exhibit flexibility, and word order can vary depending on factors like emphasis, context, or grammatical constructions.

Phonological typology often does not have the same power of generalisation as the examples of typology discussed above. For instance, while knowing that a language has SOV as its basic word order also tells us that this

language probably has postpositions and preposed relative clauses. Knowing that a language has click

consonants basically tells us nothing more than simply that. Briefly, linguists differentiate **tone languages** (languages with tonemes) and **stress languages** (languages where stress and/or accent play a vital role). Languages with an extensive tonal system tend to make less use of stress and accent and vice versa. The functional load carried by tonemes in one language may be carried by stress/accent in another.

However, the functions of tonemes and stress/accent are not entirely the same. Tonemes give **paradigmatic prominence** to a syllable, while stress/accent mainly gives **syntagmatic prominence**. The main function of tonemes is to distinguish each syllable from any other possible syllable with the same segmental phonemes. In Chinese, for instance, the syllable *ma* represents different words if pronounced with a high even tone, a rising tone, a low falling-rising tone, or a falling tone:

mā (a high even tone) means *mother*

má (a rising tone) means *hemp*

mǎ (a low falling-rising tone) means *horse*

mà (a falling tone) means *to scold*

In comparison, the main function of stress/accent is to give prominence to one or more syllables in a word over other unstressed or unaccentuated syllables in the same word. For instance, the English word *lackadaisical* has its main stress on the third syllable, not on the first, second or fourth:

*lack-a-**DAI**-si-cal*

In other words, tonemes imply comparisons between different words that do not belong within the same stretch of speech, while stress/accent implies comparisons within the same word or stretch of speech. It should also be noted, however, that the placement of stress may have paradigmatic functions as well, as when the noun ***PER**mit* has its main stress on the first syllable and the verb *per**MIT*** on the second.

The distinction between tone languages and stress languages is not absolute. Norwegian is a stress language with tonemes, and Chinese is a tone language with stress/accent. In both cases, however, there is no doubt which type each language belongs to. Tonemes play only a marginal role in Norwegian, and stress/accent plays only a marginal role in Chinese.

Tone languages may be further divided into those with **contour tones** and those with **level tones**. Contour tones are mainly distinguished by shape: rising, falling, rising-falling etc. Level tones are basically distinguished by pitch level: high, mid, low etc. Contour tones seem to be most widespread in Asia, while level tones seem to be more widespread in Africa. But the distinction is much more complex. In tone-rich languages like Cantonese, tones will often be distinguished by both contour and level: high rising vs. low rising, high falling vs. low falling etc. In many African languages, sequences of different level tones have often combined to produce new contour tones.

Stress languages may be further divided into those with so-called **free** (or unpredictable) **stress** and those with **fixed** (or predictable) **stress**. Like other Germanic languages, English has free stress, as the contrast between the noun *permit* and the verb *permit* shows. In such languages, stress may serve to distinguish one word for another.

In languages with fixed stress, it does not serve to distinguish one word from another. The following subtypes are common:

1. The main stress falls on the last syllable (French, Turkish)
2. The main stress falls on the first syllable (Czech, Hungarian, Latvian)
3. The main stress falls on the penultimate (second-last) syllable (Swahili)

TASK 8. All the statements below are false. Identify the mistake and give the correct answer.

1. Knowing that a language has click consonants allows us to predict its basic word order.

2. Stress languages never have tonal features, and tone languages never have stress features.
3. In Chinese, the syllable "ma" has only two possible tonal variations.
4. English is a fixed-stress language, meaning stress always falls on the first syllable.
5. All African languages have level tones, while all Asian languages have contour tones.
6. The main function of stress is to distinguish one syllable from another in different words.
7. Contour tones are only found in Asia, and level tones are only found in Africa.
8. Stress placement in a word always follows a strict, predictable pattern in all languages.
9. A tone language cannot also be a stress language, and vice versa.
10. In all languages, stress is used to create meaning distinctions between words.
11. The word order of a language determines whether it is a tone or stress language.
12. In languages with fixed stress, stress placement serves to distinguish between different words.

Linguistic typology studies and classifies languages according to different features. It makes it possible to classify languages into larger groups according to the way they use sounds, types of morphology they do or do not possess and how they order the elements in sentences. Some features can be found all over the world in unrelated languages. The mere fact that two languages share a feature does not imply that they are related.

There is, in principle, no limit to the variety of ways in which languages can be grouped typologically. One can distinguish languages with a relatively rich phonemic inventory from languages with a relatively poor phonemic inventory, languages with a high ratio of consonants to vowels from languages with a low ratio of consonants to vowels, languages with a fixed word order from languages with a

free word order, prefixing languages from suffixing languages, and so on. The problem lies in deciding what significance should be attached to particular typological characteristics. Although there is, not surprisingly, a tendency for genetically related languages to be typologically similar in many ways, typological similarity of itself is no proof of genetic relationship. Nor does it appear true that languages of a particular type will be associated with cultures of a particular type or at a certain stage of development. From work in typology in the second half of the 20th century, it emerged that certain logically unconnected features tend to occur together, so the presence of feature *A* in a given language will tend to imply the presence of feature *B*. The discovery of unexpected implications of this kind calls for an explanation and gives a stimulus to research in many branches of linguistics.

REVISION and DISCUSSION/ RESEARCH ISSUES

A.

1. What is the main goal of genetic classification in linguistics?
2. Provide an example of a language family and its subfamilies.
3. Why is the concept of common ancestry significant in genetic classification?
Can this approach fully account for language change and borrowing across families?
4. Why do linguists believe that many current language classification schemes might change in the future?
5. Can a language belong to both genetic and typological classifications simultaneously? Explain with examples.

B.

1. How do typological classifications contribute to our understanding of linguistic diversity beyond genetic classifications?
2. How does classifying languages based on structural features, such as syntax or morphology, help linguists compare unrelated languages?

3. How does the structure of agglutinative languages facilitate morphological analysis?
4. What insights can morphological classification provide about the complexity of language structures? How does it relate to cultural and cognitive aspects of communication?
5. Why might certain word orders (e.g., SVO or SOV) dominate across languages? What might this reveal about human cognition and sentence processing?

C.

1. What factors influence the development of specific functional languages, such as trade or liturgical languages? How do these reflect the needs of their communities?
2. How do borrowing and language contact challenge the boundaries set by genetic or typological classifications? Can these processes blur the lines between language families?
3. How might combining multiple classification methods (e.g., genetic, typological, and sociolinguistic) provide a more holistic understanding of languages? What challenges can arise in integrating these approaches?

D.

Discuss the implications of fusional language structures on language learning and teaching strategies.

Discuss the role of irregular forms in fusional languages and their impact on morphological analysis.

Discuss some linguistic implications of classifying a language as isolating, particularly in relation to language learning and translation?

Discuss the role of isolating languages in understanding human communication and the evolution of linguistic structures across cultures.

Discuss the implications of using an agglutinative structure on language learning and processing for speakers of non-agglutinative languages.

E.

Do the research into the areal classification of languages.

Do the research into the sociolinguistic classification of languages.

Do the research into the functional classification of languages.

VI. WORLD LANGUAGES

About 7,000 languages are spoken around the world today. The actual number depends on where the line is drawn between language and dialect—an arbitrary decision, because languages are always in flux. But specialists applying a reasonably uniform criterion across the globe count well over 2,000 languages in Asia and Africa, while Europe has just shy of 300. In between are the Pacific region, with over 1,300 languages, and the Americas, with just over 1,000. Languages spoken natively by over a million speakers number around 250, but the vast majority have very few speakers. Something like half are thought likely to disappear over the next few decades, as speakers of endangered languages turn to more widely spoken ones.

The languages of the world are grouped into perhaps 430 language families, based on their origin, as determined by comparing similarities among languages and deducing how they evolved from earlier ones. As with languages, there is quite a lot of disagreement about the number of language families, reflecting our meager knowledge of many present-day languages and even sparser knowledge of their history. The figure 430 comes from Glottolog.org, which actually lists them all. While the world's language families may well go back to a smaller number of original languages, even to a single mother tongue, scholars disagree on how far back current methods permit us to trace the history of languages.

While it is normal for languages to borrow from other languages, occasionally a totally new language is created by mixing elements of two distinct languages to such a degree that we would not want to identify one of the source languages as the mother tongue. This is what led to the development of Media Lengua, a language of Ecuador formed through contact among speakers of Spanish and speakers of Quechua. In this language, practically all the word stems are from Spanish, while all of the endings are from Quechua. Just a handful of languages have come into being in this way, but less extreme forms of language mixture have resulted in over a hundred pidgins and creoles currently spoken in many parts of the world. Most arose during Europe's colonial era, when European colonists used their language to

communicate with local inhabitants, who in turn blended vocabulary from the European language with grammar largely from their native language.

Also among the languages of the world are about 300 sign languages used mainly in communicating among and with the deaf. The structure of sign languages typically has little historical connection to the structure of nearby spoken languages.

Some languages have been constructed expressly, often by a single individual, to meet communication demands among speakers with no common language. Esperanto, designed to serve as a universal language and used as a second language by some two million, according to some estimates, is the prime example, but it is only one among several hundred would-be international auxiliary languages.

The number of languages is constantly in flux because we are learning more about them every day. Beyond that, languages themselves are in flux. They are living and dynamic, used by communities whose lives are shaped by the rapidly changing world.

The World Atlas of Languages (WAL) structures data around two dimensions: languages and countries. According to the *World Atlas of Languages* methodology, there are around 8324 languages, spoken or signed, documented by governments, public institutions and academic communities. Out of 8324, around 7000 languages are still in use. (the data is stated in 2024; retrieved from <https://en.wal.unesco.org/world-atlas-languages>)

The World Atlas of Languages demonstrates linguistic diversity in a multi-layered manner, taking advantage of technological and scientific progress. It applies a wide definition of language that includes all communication systems created, defined, described and used. However, the prime focus is on natural human signed/spoken languages, used across and within countries, regions, and communities. It brings forth the implications that:

- language is a carrier of human heritage (in identity, historical, cultural and linguistic material);
- language is a local knowledge repository system (in identity and ethnic issues, traditional knowledge, biodiversity);

- language is a system for communicating between people (including in the political, sociocultural and economic domains);
- language is a regional, national and global economic-political resource to be managed as an asset along with natural, human, financial and other resources, as part of good governance and society development.

The World Atlas of Languages is an online platform that reflects the dynamism and depths of the global linguistic diversity. It provides accurate, reliable, up-to-date and robust data on the world's languages. By taking advantage of scientific and technological progress and drawing from data offered by trusted providers, including national governments, academia and language communities, the World Atlas of Languages is able rapidly to capture linguistic diversity shifts. (the access available here https://en.wal.unesco.org/discover/languages?text&sort_by=title&f%5B0%5D=language_situation_language_facet%3A5&page=2)

VII. ENDANGERED AND DEAD LANGUAGES

Language contact means changes in one language resulting from the influence of another language. The speakers of any given language are almost always in some kind of contact with the speakers of one or more other languages, for any of several reasons. When two different languages are spoken in adjacent areas, speakers on both sides of the boundary will be exposed to the other language, and may often gain some fluency in that other language. Because of conquest or migration, speakers of two or more languages may be mixed together in a single community. Speakers of one language may travel and become exposed to different languages spoken elsewhere. And, of course, in modern times the mass media have brought awareness of a number of languages into regions in which these were formerly unknown.

In all such cases, speakers of one language may, deliberately or unconsciously, introduce into their language features of another language to which they have been exposed, and we, therefore, speak of language contact, or simply contact. The consequences of contact may range from the trivial to the far-reaching. At the simplest level, speakers may merely take over a few words from their neighbours; this is called **borrowing**, and the words borrowed are **loan words** in the receiving language. This happens most readily because the words are the names of genuinely new things: for example, English-speakers had never seen coffee, or boomerangs, or tobacco, or chocolate, or pizzas until they encountered them being used by speakers of various other languages, and so took them over along with their foreign names. But it can also happen purely for reasons of prestige: the enormous prestige of Norman French in England after the Conquest brought thousands of Norman French words into English, where they often displaced their native equivalents. But contact can go much further than this, affecting grammar and pronunciation. For example, the Mayan languages of Mexico and Guatemala have acquired a number of new phonemes from the local prestige language, Spanish.

Some varieties of Scottish Gaelic have lost the inflected prepositions of that language and replaced them with prepositional phrases comparable to English ones.

Few languages are, or have ever been, sufficiently isolated to avoid some degree of contact, and hence virtually every language shows some evidence of ancient or modern contact with other languages. In recent years, the world dominance of English has led to massive English influence upon languages from French to Japanese. In extreme cases, the effects of contact may be so overwhelming that one language is abandoned entirely by its speakers in favour of another, in the process called language death.

Language death is the disappearance of a language as a mother tongue.

A language, particularly a minority language, may come under enormous pressure from a more prestigious or more widely used language spoken nearby. Native speakers of the language under pressure may find themselves obliged, not only to learn the local prestige language, but to use it in an ever-greater number of contexts. Eventually, a time may come when many children are no longer learning the threatened language as their mother tongue, or are learning it only imperfectly. At this point, we say the threatened language is dying, and the almost inevitable result is that, within a generation or two, no one will be able to speak the threatened language at all. This is **language death**, and the process which leads to it is **language shift**.

Language death is usually gradual. In any given place, at any given time, some children are still learning the dying language as their mother tongue, while others are learning it only imperfectly and still others not at all. The language may disappear completely from some areas while surviving in others.

The language spoken by the last generation or so of native speakers may be very much changed from the language spoken by an earlier generation: irregularities may be lost; the more complex or less frequent forms and sentence patterns may drop out of use; native words may be massively replaced by words taken from the prestige language; the pronunciation may change so as to become more similar to

that of the prestige language; stylistic variation may be lost, leaving only a single unvarying style. The final outcome is a dead language.

Dead language is a language which is no longer spoken. This term is applied to two quite different cases, which should be careful distinguished.

In the first case, a dead language is a language which has disappeared as a mother tongue because its speakers abandoned it in favour of some other language (or, rarely, because its speakers were all killed). This has happened countless times. A number of languages of ancient Anatolia and the Middle East have disappeared in this way, including Hittite, Sumerian and Akkadian. An unknown number of European languages disappeared in favour of Latin during the Roman Empire, including Etruscan in Italy, Gaulish in Gaul and Iberian in Spain. In the British Isles, Cornish and Manx have vanished in modern times in favour of English. And hundreds of indigenous languages in Australia and the Americas have been abandoned in favour of English, Spanish and Portuguese.

A slight complication is that one or two of these truly dead languages, such as Cornish, have today a few speakers; these people speak the dead language as a second language, having learned it from books. Whether we continue to regard such a language as dead is a matter of taste, but most linguists would probably regard Cornish as dead, since it perhaps has no native speakers. A few dead languages may continue to find some use as religious or literary languages, but again, in the absence of native speakers, they may be regarded as dead.

In the second case, the language in question never ceases to be spoken as a mother tongue, but over a period of time it changes so substantially that its later forms are so different from the earlier form (and often from one another) that it no longer makes sense to apply the same name. This has happened to Latin. Latin has never ceased to be spoken in Portugal, Spain, France and Italy, but the modern forms of Latin are so different from the language of the Romans, and from one another, that we no longer find it convenient to call them 'Latin'. Hence, we speak of *French* rather than 'Paris Latin', *Catalan* rather than 'Barcelona Latin', and the like.

Currently, out of the world's 7,168 living languages, 3,170 (44%) are classified as **endangered** (the data is stated in 2024; retrieved from <https://www.ethnologue.com/insights/how-many-languages-endangered/>).

A language is endangered when it is on a path toward extinction. Without adequate documentation, a language that is extinct can never be revived. A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children.

As with the total number of languages, this count changes constantly. A language becomes endangered when its users begin to pass on a more dominant language to the children in the community. Due to their nature, endangered languages often have few speakers left, and it may be difficult to get information about them. Other times, the last known speaker of a language may die without public records. In modern times, languages have usually become extinct due to cultural assimilation, leading to language shift, and the gradual abandonment of a native language in favor of a foreign language, primarily those of European countries.

Language endangerment may be the result of external forces such as military, economic, religious, cultural or educational subjugation, or it may be caused by internal forces, such as a community's negative attitude towards its own language. Internal pressures often have their source in external ones, and both halt the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions. Many indigenous peoples, associating their disadvantaged social position with their culture, have come to believe that their languages are not worth retaining. They abandon their languages and cultures in hopes of overcoming discrimination, to secure a livelihood and enhance social mobility or to assimilate to the global marketplace.

In 2002 - 2003, UNESCO asked an international group of linguists to develop a framework for determining the vitality of a language in order to assist in policy development, identification of needs and appropriate safeguarding measures. This Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages elaborated a landmark concept paper entitled “Language Vitality and Endangerment”, which established the following **nine criteria**:

★ Sociolinguistic Factors

- Intergenerational Language Transmission (*Is the language passed down?*)
- Absolute Number of Speakers (*How many people speak it?*)
- Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population (*What percentage of the community speaks it?*)

★ Usage & Adaptation

- Shifts in Domains of Language Use (*Where is the language spoken?*)
- Response to New Domains and Media (*Is the language used in technology and media?*)
- Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy (*Are there resources to learn the language?*)

★ Support & Documentation

- Type and Quality of Documentation (*How well is the language recorded?*)
- Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes & Policies (*Does the government support or suppress it?*)
- Community Members’ Attitudes Towards Their Own Language (*Do people value and use their language?*)

Note that none of these factors should be used alone. A language that is ranked highly according to one criterion may deserve immediate and urgent attention due to other factors.

This UNESCO document establishes **six degrees of endangerment** that may be distinguished with regard to intergenerational transmission. **To add colours and font to degrees**

Safe – language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted

Vulnerable – most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)

Definitely endangered – children no longer learn the language as a 'mother tongue' in the home

Severely endangered – language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves

Critically endangered – the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently

Extinct – there are no speakers left

(more detailed information can be found here

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000183699/PDF/183699eng.pdf.multi>

VIII. THE DESIGN FEATURES OF LANGUAGE

Language is a system of communication uniquely associated with humans and distinguished by its capacity to express complex ideas. Notably, studies analysing the various features of human language have informed our understanding of language as a distinctly human trait. Specifically, language is thought to possess a highly structured system of encoding and representing concepts through either speech sounds or manual gestures, depending on whether they are spoken or signed.

Questions about the nature of language have preoccupied linguists for a long time. Answers have varied, and often reflect the biases and blind spots of various schools of Linguistics. Nevertheless, there is a degree of consensus. One particularly influential set of answers was provided by the linguist Charles Hockett, who refers to the things all languages have in common as the ‘design features of language’.

One of Hockett's most important contributions was his development of the design-feature approach to comparative linguistics. He attempted to distinguish the similarities and differences among animal communication systems and human language. This linguistic anthropologist conducted a pioneering study of language, and he initially developed seven features. However, after many revisions, he settled on 13 design-features in the “The Origin of Speech” (1960). Hockett argued that while every communication system has **some** of the 13 design features, only *human, spoken* language has **all** 13 features. In turn, that differentiates human spoken language from animal communication and other human communication systems such as written language. Thus, it can be said that human language share a general set of features that help set it apart from communication among animals.

1. **Vocal-auditory channel.** Sounds emitted from the mouth and perceived by the auditory system. With the exception of signed languages, natural language is vocally transmitted by speakers as speech sounds and auditorily received by listeners as speech waves. Although writing and sign language

both utilize the manual-visual channel, the expression of human language primarily occurs in the vocal-auditory channel.

2. **Broadcast transmission and directional reception.** All human language can be heard if it is within range of another person's auditory channel. Language signals (i.e. speech sounds) are emitted as waveforms, which are projected in all directions ('broadcasted into auditory space'), but are perceived by receiving listeners as emanating from a particular direction and point of origin (the vocalising speaker). In other words, an auditory/audible human language signal is sent out in all directions but is perceived in a limited direction. For example, humans are more proficient in determining the location of a sound source when the sound is projecting directly in front of them, as opposed to a sound source projected directly behind them.
3. **Rapid fading (transitoriness).** Language signals are considered temporal as sound waves rapidly fade after they are uttered; this characteristic is also known as rapid fading. In other words, this temporal nature of language signals requires humans to receive and interpret speech sounds at their time of utterance, since they are not subsequently recoverable. Rapid fading of a signal in human communication differs from such things as animal tracks and written language because an utterance does not continue to exist after it has been broadcast. With that in mind, it is important to note that Hockett viewed spoken language as the primary concern for investigation. Written language was seen as being secondary because of its recent evolution in culture.
4. **Interchangeability.** A person has the ability to speak and hear the same signal. Anything that a person is able to hear can be reproduced in spoken language. Humans can transmit and receive identical linguistic signals, and so are able to reproduce any linguistic message they understand. This allows for the interlocutory roles of 'speaker' and 'listener' to alternate between the

conversation's participants via turn taking within the context of linguistic communication.

5. **Total feedback.** Humans have an ability to perceive the linguistic signals they transmit i.e. they have understanding of what they are communicating to others. Speakers can hear themselves speak and monitor their speech production and internalize what they are producing by language. The sender of a message also perceives the message.
6. **Specialization.** Human language sounds are specialized for communication. Language signals are emitted for the sole purpose of communication, and not any other biological functions such as eating. In other words, language signals are intentional, and not just a side effect of some other behaviour. Specialization is apparent in the anatomy of human speech organs and our ability to exhibit some control over these organs. For example, a key assumption in the evolution of language is that the descent of the larynx has allowed humans to produce speech sounds. Additionally, in terms of control, humans are generally able to control the movements of their tongue and mouth.

Contrasting example: Biological functions which may have a communicative side effect: such as a panting dog which hangs out its tongue to cool off (biological), may simultaneously indicate to its owner that it is feeling hot or thirsty (communicative).

7. **Semanticity.** Specific language signals represent specific meanings; the associations are 'relatively fixed'. An example is how a single object is represented by different language signals i.e. words in different languages. In French, the word *sel* represents *a white, crystalline substance consisting of sodium and chlorine atoms*. Yet, in English, this same substance is represented by the word *salt*. There is a fixed relationship between a signal and a meaning. In other words, a specific signal can be matched with a specific meaning within a particular language system. For example, all people who

understand English have the ability to make a connection between a specific word and what that word represents or refers to.

8. **Arbitrariness.** There is an arbitrary relationship between a signal and its meaning. That is, the signal is related to the meaning by convention or by instinct but has no inherent relationship with the meaning. There is no intrinsic or logical connection between the form of specific language signals and the nature of the specific meanings they represent. Instead, the signal and the meaning are linked by either convention or instinct. Arbitrariness within human language suggests that there is no direct connection between the type of signal (word) and what is being referred.

Contrasting example: Conveyance of aggression in crabs – strongly threatened crabs express their potential intention to fight by raising their front claw, which is partially iconic given that crabs use their claw pincers to attack prey and defend against predators.

9. **Discreteness.** Language can be said to be built up from discrete units (e.g., phonemes in human language). These basic units can be put in varying order to represent different meanings. Exchanging such discrete units causes a change in the meaning of a signal. This is an abrupt change, rather than a continuous change of meaning.
10. **Displacement.** People can refer to things in space and time and communicate about things that are not present, distant in time or space. Language signals may be used to convey ideas about things not physically or temporally present at the time of the communicative event such as a topic that is linked to the past or future.
11. **Productivity.** Humans can use language to understand and produce an indefinite number of novel utterances. Language is an open system. We can produce potentially an infinite number of different messages by combining the elements differently. People can create new and unique meanings of utterances from previously existing utterances and sounds. Productivity is also

called openness or creativity. Human language is open and productive in the sense that humans have the ability to say things that have never before been spoken or heard.

12. **Traditional (Cultural) transmission.** Although humans are born with the innate ability to learn language, they learn (a) particular linguistic system(s) as their native language(s) from elders in their community. In other words, language is socially transmitted from one generation to the next, and a child reared in isolation does not acquire language. Each generation needs to learn the system of communication from the preceding generation. Human language is not completely innate and acquisition depends in part on the learning of a language. While certain aspects of language may be innate, humans acquire words and their native language from other speakers. That is different from many animal communication systems because most animals are born with the innate knowledge, and skills necessary for survival.

13. **Duality of patterning.** Large numbers of meaningful signals (e.g., morphemes or words) are produced from a small number of discrete meaningless units (e.g., phonemes). Meaningless phonic segments (phonemes) are combined to make meaningful words, which, in turn, are combined again to make sentences. Humans have the ability to recombine a finite set of phonemes to create an infinite number of words, which, in turn, can be combined to make an unlimited number of different sentences.

In a report published in 1968 with anthropologist and scientist Stuart A. Altmann, Hockett derived three more Design Features, bringing the total to 16. These are the additional three:

14. **Prevarication.** People can say falsehoods, lies, and meaningless statements; they say things that can be deceptive.

15. **Reflexiveness (Reflexivity).** Language can be used to communicate about the very system it is, and language can discuss language. This use of language is also referred to as metalanguage, and it takes many forms:

- comment on a particular language item, e.g. a discussion of word meaning;
- comment on a particular use of language, e.g. saying that Prof. Brown used very complex sentences, or this politician talks in clichés;
- comment on a particular language, e.g. Finnish has fourteen cases, 'chaise' is the French for 'chair';
- comment on language itself, i.e. linguistics.

16. **Learnability.** A speaker of a language can learn another language.

TASK 9. Choose the correct option.

1. Which design feature of language refers to the ability to refer to things that are not physically present?

- A) Productivity
- B) Displacement
- C) Reflexiveness

2. What does "arbitrariness" in language mean?

- A) Language signals are logically connected to their meanings
- B) There is no inherent relationship between a signal and its meaning
- C) Language meanings are determined biologically

3. The ability of humans to produce and understand an infinite number of novel utterances is called:

- A) Productivity
- B) Semanticity
- C) Learnability

4. Which feature describes how humans can use language to talk about language itself?

- A) Prevarication

B) Reflexiveness

C) Duality of patterning

5. What is an example of "total feedback" in human communication?

A) A speaker monitoring their own speech while talking

B) A person listening to someone else's speech

C) A teacher giving feedback on a student's essay

6. What does "interchangeability" mean in the context of language?

A) Only some people can produce linguistic signals, but everyone can understand them

B) Humans can both send and receive the same linguistic signals

C) Language sounds have fixed meanings across all languages

7. Which of the following best describes "duality of patterning"?

A) Language allows for an infinite combination of words and sentences

B) Meaningless sounds (phonemes) combine to form meaningful words

C) Language is passed from one generation to the next

8. What is an example of "prevarication" in human language?

A) A person using language to talk about a past event

B) Someone telling a lie

C) Someone making a hypothetical statement

9. The feature that allows humans to learn multiple languages is called:

A) Learnability

B) Specialization

C) Broadcast transmission

10. How does "traditional (cultural) transmission" differ from most animal communication systems?

- A) Human language is entirely innate, while animal communication must be learned
- B) Human language is learned from previous generations, whereas many animals are born with instinctive communication skills
- C) Animals can learn multiple communication systems, but humans cannot

TASK 10. Match the design feature of language (Column A) with its correct description (Column B)

A	B
1. Displacement	A) The ability to use language to talk about language itself.
2. Arbitrariness	B) The ability to refer to things that are not present in space or time.
3. Cultural transmission	C) The property that allows speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of novel utterances.
4. Reflexiveness	D) The idea that there is no natural connection between a word and its meaning.
5. Duality of patterning	E) Language is passed from one generation to the next rather than being purely innate.
6. Interchangeability	F) Language signals have specific meanings that are understood within a linguistic community.
7. Semanticity	G) Meaningless sounds (phonemes) combine to form meaningful words,

	which can then be combined into sentences.
8. Total feedback	H) The sounds used in language are meaningfully distinct. The occurrence of one sound instead of the other leads to a misuse of language.
9. Prevarication	I) The ability of humans to both transmit and receive the same linguistic signals.
10. Discreteness	J) The ability of speakers to monitor their own speech and hear what they are saying.
11. Rapid fading	K) The capacity to use language to deceive, lie, or discuss hypothetical situations.
12. Productivity	L) An utterance does not continue to exist after it has been broadcast.

DISCUSSION/ RESEARCH ISSUES: COMPARING HUMAN AND ANIMAL COMMUNICATION (based on the design features of human language)

1. Which design features of human language are completely absent in animal communication, and why?
2. How does the concept of 'arbitrariness' differ between human language and animal communication systems? Are there any exceptions in the animal world?
3. In what ways do animals exhibit 'semanticity'? Can their signals be considered as having fixed meanings like human words?
4. Do any animal communication systems demonstrate 'displacement,' or is this feature unique to human language?

5. To what extent can some animals, such as primates or birds, learn aspects of 'productivity' in communication?
6. Is 'cultural transmission' present in any animal communication system, or is human language unique in its reliance on social learning?
7. How does 'duality of patterning' (combining meaningless units to create meaningful signals) compare between human language and complex animal communication, such as whale songs or bird calls?
8. Do any animals exhibit 'prevarication,' meaning the ability to deceive or intentionally mislead through communication?
9. What role does 'total feedback' play in human speech, and do animals have any ability to monitor and adjust their own communication in real-time?
10. Can the study of animal communication systems provide insights into the evolution of human language? If so, which species offer the most valuable comparisons?

IX. MODES OF COMMUNICATION

Human communication encompasses a variety of modes through which individuals convey information, emotions, and intentions.

Verbal Communication

This mode involves the use of spoken or written language to share messages in conversations, speeches, debates, and storytelling or books, articles, academic papers, reports, emails, and other textual media. It includes face-to-face conversations, telephone calls, written correspondence, and digital communications. Verbal communication is characterized by the use of words, syntax, and grammar to construct meaningful exchanges. The key components here are 1) rules that govern sentence structure; 2) word usage and the set of words a person knows and uses; 3) paralanguage (vocal elements like tone, pitch, and speed that add meaning to spoken words).

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication refers to the transmission of messages without the use of words. This includes facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, and other body language cues. Nonverbal signals can complement, contradict, or enhance verbal messages, playing a crucial role in conveying emotions and attitudes. Linguists differentiate the following types:

- ✓ kinesics (body movements, gestures, and posture)
- ✓ proxemics (use of personal space to convey meaning)
- ✓ haptics (tactile communication, i.e. through touch)
- ✓ oculusics (eye behavior, such as eye contact, paying attention, respect, and emotions, e.g. gaze, stare, or glare)
- ✓ olfactics (olfactory communication involves the use of scents and smells to convey messages, i.e. the message is transmitted through the sense of smell, such as body odors, use of perfumes, pheromones, flowers, and the like)
- ✓ gustatory (taste) communication (e.g. offering a distasteful meal or a salty lemonade).

Visual Communication

This mode utilizes visual elements to convey ideas or emotions. Examples include diagrams, charts, infographics, photographs, images, logos, symbols, videos, and other visual aids. Visual communication aids to simplify complex concepts and enhance understanding.

Digital Communication

With the development of technology, digital communication has also become a significant mode. It includes emails, text messages, social media interactions, and video conferencing. Digital communication combines elements of verbal, nonverbal, and written modes. It is the exchange of information through electronic devices and platforms in synchronous (real-time) or asynchronous (delayed responses) ways.

Mode	Advantages	Challenges
<i>Verbal</i>	direct and precise; complex ideas can be shared; supports immediate feedback in spoken interactions; enables asynchronous communication across time and space in written interactions.	subject to misinterpretation due to language barriers or unclear expression; written interactions lack the immediacy and emotional implication of face-to-face communication.
<i>Nonverbal</i>	enhances verbal communication; universally understood in some forms (e.g., emotions like happiness or anger).	highly dependent on cultural norms and personal boundaries; misuse or overuse can lead to discomfort or misinterpretation; some types are limited as a primary communication mode.
<i>Visual</i>	makes abstract ideas tangible and easier to grasp;	interpretation can vary; requires clarity and design expertise.

	appeals to visual learners.	
<i>Digital</i>	enables global connectivity and instant communication; multimedia capabilities enhance message delivery.	risk of information overload or misinterpretation; can lack the personal touch of face-to-face interaction.

DISCUSSION/ RESEARCH ISSUES

1. Compare spoken and written aspects of verbal communication in more details.
2. Provide examples of kinesics in different communication contexts and/or different cultures.
3. Provide examples of proxemics in different communication contexts and/or different cultures.
4. Provide examples of haptics in different communication contexts and/or different cultures.
5. Provide examples of oculesics in different communication contexts and/or different cultures.
6. Provide examples of olfactics in different communication contexts and/or different cultures.
7. Provide examples of gustatory (taste) communication in different contexts and/or different cultures.
8. Complete the table above by adding more advantages and challenges of each communication mode.

X. HUMAN LANGUAGE: FUNCTIONS

A language is used to perform a variety of different things called functions. It is used to make statements, ask questions, express emotions, direct people, etc. It is used to perform practical everyday functions, although the number of functions can indeed, be disputed from a linguistic or a socio-linguistic point of view. We could argue that functions in a language refer to what language items do in the real world – what we want to achieve in communication terms. Some language items, however, cannot be taken at face value as flat, binary communication episodes, from speaker *A* to speaker *B*. For example, “Where do you think you are going?” has a clear meaning, if taken literally, but within a language function, it means, “You are not supposed to go there!”

Roman Jakobson’s (1960) model of the functions of language distinguishes six elements, or factors that are necessary for communication to occur:

1. Context
2. Addresser (sender)
3. Addressee (receiver)
4. Contact
5. Common code
6. Message.

This linguist identified six primary functions of language, each corresponding to a different aspect of the communication process presented in an overview below:

★ **Referential Function:**

Purpose: To convey information about the external world

e.g. *The sun rises in the east. The Earth is round.*

This function focuses on the context or subject matter, describes a situation, object or mental state, providing factual information or descriptions.

★ **Emotive (Expressive) Function:**

Purpose: To express the speaker's emotions or attitudes.

e.g. *I'm thrilled about the news!*

e.g. *Wow, what a beauty!*

This function communicates the speaker's internal state, often through interjections or tone.

✦ **Conative Function:**

Purpose: To influence or direct the behavior of the listener.

e.g. *Please close the window.*

e.g. *Fred! Come inside it's bed time!*

This function includes commands, requests, or questions aimed at prompting a response or action from the listener.

✦ **Phatic Function:**

Purpose: To establish, maintain, or terminate communication.

e.g. *Hello, how are you?* e.g. *Ok?*, e.g. *Hummm.* e.g. *Bye!*

This function focuses on the channel of communication, provides the keys to open, maintain, verify or close the communication channel, ensuring that the connection between speakers is open and operative.

✦ **Metalingual (Metalinguistic) Function:**

Purpose: To discuss or clarify language itself.

e.g. *What does 'ambiguous' mean?*

e.g. *How does Jakobson define 'code'?*

This function is used to ensure mutual understanding of language terms and meanings, often through definitions or clarifications.

✦ **Poetic Function:**

Purpose: To focus on the aesthetic qualities of language, i.e. "the message for its own sake"

e.g. *She sells seashells by the seashore.*

This function emphasizes the form and style of the message, often found in poetry, slogans, or wordplay.

Each factor is the focal point of a relation, or function, which operates between the message and the factor.

Michael Halliday (1975) identifies seven language functions although his research was done with monolingual children. The first four functions help the child to satisfy physical, emotional, and social needs. The rest three ones help the child to come to terms with his or her environment.

✦ **Instrumental function:** Language is used to express needs, to fulfil a need, such as to obtain food, drink or comfort. This typically includes concrete nouns.

e.g. *Want ice-cream.*

✦ **Regulatory function:** Language is used to tell others what to do, to influence the behaviour of others including persuading, commanding or requesting.

e.g. *Buy me a toy!*

✦ **Interactional function:** Language is used to make contact with others and form relationships. e.g. *Love you, Mummy!*

✦ **Personal function:** Language is used to express feelings, opinions, attitudes, and individual identity

e.g. *Me good girl.*

✦ **Heuristic function:** Language is used to explore, learn and discover, i.e. to gain knowledge about the environment and world. This could include questions or a running commentary of a child's actions.

e.g. *Why it rains?*

✦ **Imaginative function:** Language is used to tell stories and jokes, and to create an imaginary environment. This typically accompanies play or leisure activities.

e.g. *Dragon breathes fire.*

✦ **Representational function:** Language is used to convey facts and information.

e.g. *The apple is red.*

According to Halliday, as the child moves into the mother tongue, these functions give way to the generalised "metafunctions" of language.

Leaving the linguist's point of view aside, functions in a language refer to why we use a language to communicate, in a variety of formal and informal ways, which in turn require specific grammatical structures and vocabularies.

Some of the specific functional purposes in language are the following:

- To compare and contrast
- To order people to do things
- To ask permission
- To apologise
- To thank
- To persuade
- To ask questions
- To express likes and dislikes
- To talk about cause and effect
- To summarize
- To sequence
- To predict
- To agree/disagree
- To greeting people/introductions

The interpersonal metafunction of a language covers all the ways in which we interact through language. This includes the basic mechanisms of interaction, such as turn-taking and interruption and also the ways in which we set out to achieve things by using language. By using the ideas of functions in a language, teaching (and thereby learning) focuses more on the meaning and the goals of communication and less on the form, with learners using language to achieve specific purposes and achieving more targeted goals.

Human language serves multiple functions that facilitate communication, expression, and social interaction. These functions illustrate the diverse roles language plays in human interaction, extending beyond mere information exchange to include emotional expression, social bonding, and artistic creativity.

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