

Lecture 1 Beginning Concepts

Content:

1. Language vs. speech, thought and communication
2. **Signal and meaning**
3. Linguistic Creativity
4. Prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar
5. **Linguistic competence vs. linguistic performance**

Language, thought, and communication

Is the term **language** synonymous to the term **speech**?


No! **Speech** is one form of **language**. There are other forms such as writing and signals (i.e. sign language).

What about **thought**, is it synonymous to the term **language**?

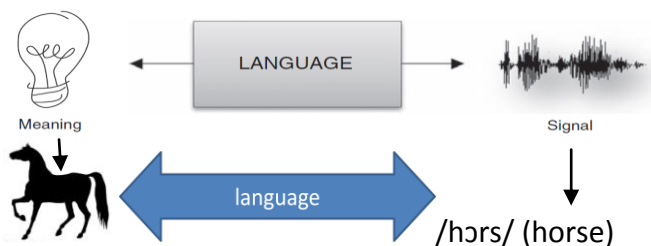
No! There are individuals (e.g. infants) who can think but cannot produce language.

Similarly, we can ask: are the terms **language** and **communication** synonymous?

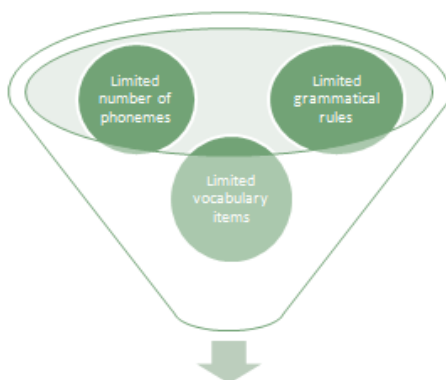
“Language is the primary communication system for human beings, but it is not the only way to

communicate” (Fernandez and Cairns, 2010, p.6) 

Signal and meaning



Linguistic Creativity



- Unlimited number of linguistic utterances

Prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar

Prescriptive grammar provides a “prescription” (i.e. how language should be used)

“People who teach language are interested

in teaching a standardized use of language, the form of a language that

is accepted in academic and business circles” (Fernandez and Cairns, 2010, p. 9)

Descriptive grammar describes how a certain language is actually used by its native speakers

For example: *Me and Nasser went to Dammam*

is accepted by a descriptive grammarian, but not by a prescriptive one.

Linguistic competence vs. linguistic performance

- **Linguistic competence** is the linguistic knowledge that provides a system for pairing sound and meaning (i.e. the ability of linking words with their meanings).
- **Linguistic Performance** is the use of such knowledge (i.e. linguistic competence) in the actual processing of sentences.
- **Error vs. mistake**

References

- Fernandez, E.M. & Smith Cairns, H. (2010) *Fundamentals of Psycholinguistics*. Wiley-Blackwell