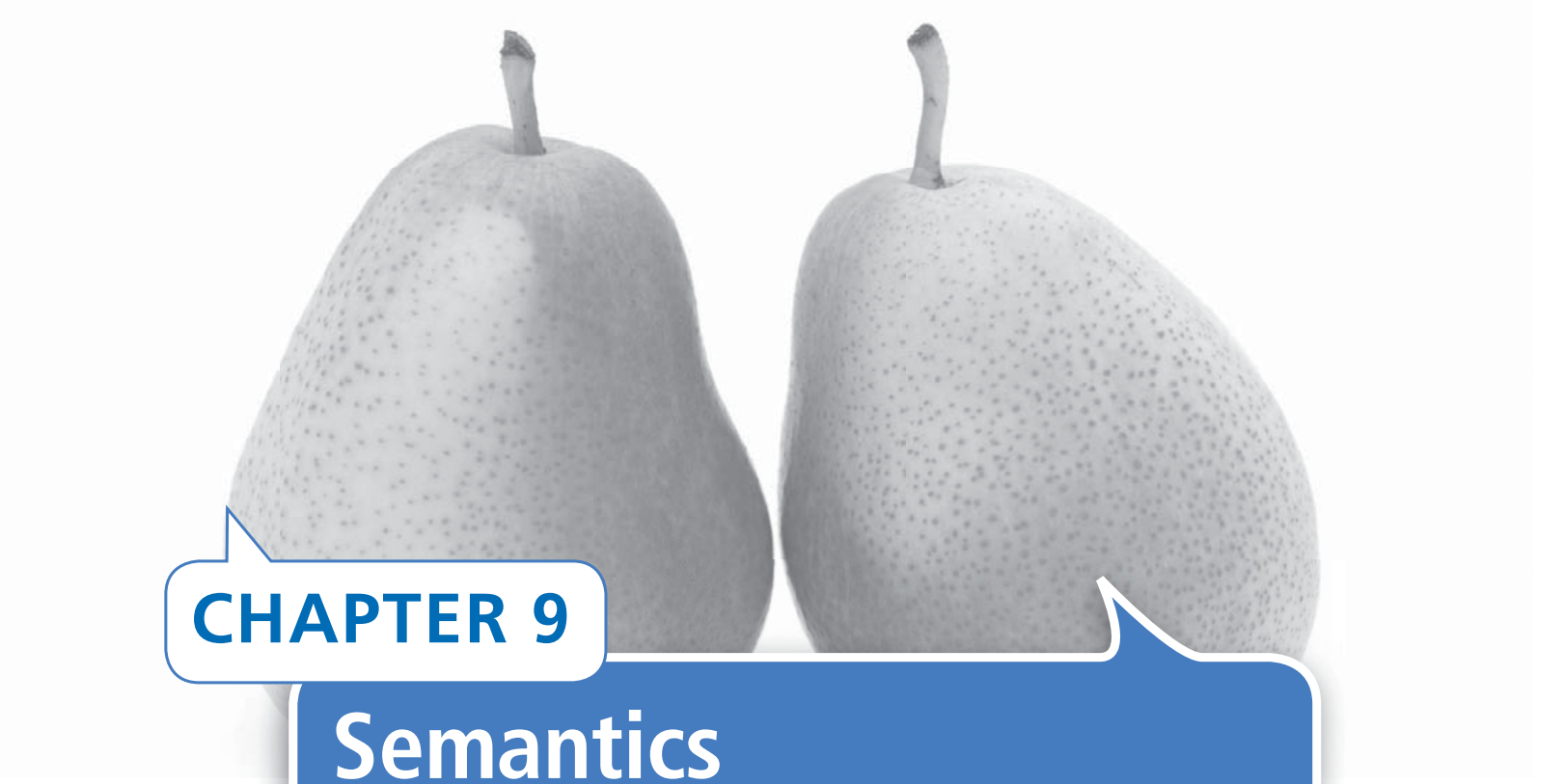


CHAPTER 9
Semantics

This one time I was flying out of SFO (San Francisco) and I happened to have a jar of home-made quince preserves in my carry-on. A TSA (Transportation Security Administration) agent stopped me, saying that the quince preserves couldn't come aboard because no gels, liquids, or aerosols were allowed past the checkpoint. I asked him politely which of those quince preserves were: gel, liquid, or aerosol, because they seemed a lot like fruit. His response, and I kid you not, was "Sir, I'm not going to argue semantics with you."

Bergen (2012)

Semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. In semantic analysis, there is always an attempt to focus on what the words conventionally mean, rather than on what an individual speaker might think they mean, or want them to mean, on a particular occasion. This approach is concerned with objective or general meaning and avoids trying to account for subjective or local meaning. Doing semantics is attempting to spell out what it is we all know when we behave as if we share knowledge of the meaning of a word, a phrase, or a sentence in a language.

Meaning

While semantics is the study of meaning in language, there is more interest in certain aspects of meaning than in others. We have already ruled out special meanings that one individual might attach to words or what TSA agents believe words mean, as in Ben Bergen's story quoted earlier. We can go further and make a broad distinction between **conceptual meaning** and **associative meaning**.

Conceptual meaning covers those basic, essential components of meaning that are conveyed by the literal use of a word. It is the type of meaning that dictionaries are designed to describe. Some of the basic components of a word like *needle* in English might include "thin, sharp, steel instrument." These components would be part of the conceptual meaning of *needle*. However, different people might have different associations or connotations attached to a word like *needle*. They might associate it with "pain," or "illness," or "blood," or "drugs," or "thread," or "knitting," or "hard to find" (especially in a haystack), and these associations may differ from one person to the next. These types of associations are not treated as part of the word's conceptual meaning.

One way in which the study of basic conceptual meaning might be helpful would be as a means of accounting for the "oddness" we experience when we read sentences such as the following:

The hamburger ate the boy.
The table listens to the radio.
The horse is reading the newspaper.

We should first note that the oddness of these sentences does not derive from their syntactic structure. According to the basic syntactic rules for forming English sentences (presented in Chapter 8), we have well-formed structures.

NP	V	NP
The hamburger	*ate*	*the boy*

This sentence is syntactically good, but semantically odd. Since the sentence *The boy ate the hamburger* is perfectly acceptable, we may be able to identify the source of the problem. The components of the conceptual meaning of the noun *hamburger* must be significantly different from those of the noun *boy*, allowing one, not the other, to "make sense" with the verb *ate*. Quite simply, the kind of noun used with *ate* must denote an entity that is capable of "eating." The noun *hamburger* doesn't have this property and the noun *boy* does.

Semantic features

We can make this observation more generally applicable by trying to determine the crucial element or feature of meaning that any noun must have in order to be

Table 9.1

	table	horse	boy	man	girl	woman
animate	−	+	+	+	+	+
human	−	−	+	+	+	+
female	−	−	−	−	+	+
adult	−	+	−	+	−	+

used as the subject of the verb *ate*. Such an element may be as general as "animate being." We can then use this idea to describe part of the meaning of words as having either plus (+) or minus (−) that particular feature. So, the feature that the noun *boy* has is "−animate" (= denotes an animate being) and the feature that the noun *hamburger* has is "−animate" (= does not denote an animate being).

This simple example is an illustration of a procedure for analyzing meaning in terms of **semantic features**. Features such as "+animate / −animate," "+human / −human," "+female / −female," for example, can be treated as the basic elements involved in differentiating the meaning of each word in a language from every other word. If we had to provide the crucial distinguishing features of the meanings of a set of English words such as *table*, *horse*, *boy*, *man*, *girl*, *woman*, we could begin with the chart in Table 9.1.

From a feature analysis like this, we can say that at least part of the meaning of the word *girl* in English involves the elements [+human, +female, −adult]. We can also characterize the feature that is crucially required in a noun in order for it to appear as the subject of a particular verb, supplementing the syntactic analysis with semantic features. We can then predict which nouns (e.g. *table*, *horse*, *hamburger*) would make the sentence semantically odd.

The _____ is reading the newspaper.
N [+human]

Words as containers of meaning

The approach just outlined is a start on analyzing the conceptual components of word meaning, but it is not without problems. For many words in a language it may not be as easy to come up with neat components of meaning. If we try to think of the components or features we would use to differentiate the nouns *advice*, *threat* and *warning*, for example, we may not be very successful. Part of the problem seems to be that the approach involves a view of words in a language as some sort of "containers" that carry meaning components. There is clearly more to the meaning of words than these basic types of features.

Semantic roles

Instead of thinking of words as containers of meaning, we can look at the "roles" they fulfill within the situation described by a sentence. If the situation is a simple event, as in *The boy kicked the ball*, then the verb describes an action (*kick*). The noun phrases in the sentence describe the roles of entities, such as people and things, involved in the action. We can identify a small number of **semantic roles** (also called "thematic roles") for these noun phrases.

Agent and theme

In our example sentence, one role is taken by the noun phrase *The boy* as "the entity that performs the action," technically known as the **agent**. Another role is taken by *the ball* as "the entity that is involved in or affected by the action," which is called the **theme** (or sometimes the "patient"). The theme can also be an entity (*The ball*) that is simply being described (i.e. not performing an action), as in *The ball was red*.

Agents and themes are the most common semantic roles. Although agents are typically human (*The boy*), as in (1) below, they can also be non-human entities that cause actions, as in noun phrases denoting a natural force (*The wind*), a machine (*A car*), or a creature (*The dog*), all of which affect *the ball* as theme in examples (2)–(4). The theme is typically non-human, but can be human (*the boy*), as in the last sentence (5).

(1) *The boy kicked the ball.*
(2) *The wind blew the ball away.*
(3) *A car ran over the ball.*
(4) *The dog caught the ball.*
(5) *The dog chased the boy.*

Instrument and experiencer

If an agent uses another entity in order to perform an action, that other entity fills the role of **instrument**. In the sentences *The boy cut the rope with an old razor* and *He drew the picture with a crayon*, the noun phrases *an old razor* and *a crayon* are being used in the semantic role of instrument.

When a noun phrase is used to designate an entity as the person who has a feeling, perception or state, it fills the semantic role of **experiencer**. If we *see, know* or *enjoy* something, we're not really performing an action (hence we are not agents). We are in the role of experiencer. In the sentence *The boy feels sad*, the experiencer (*The boy*) is the only semantic role. In the question, *Did you hear that noise?*, the experiencer is *you* and the theme is *that noise*.

Location, source and goal

A number of other semantic roles designate where an entity is in the description of an event. Where an entity is (*on the table*, *in the room*) fills the role of **location**. Where the entity moves from is the **source** (*from Chicago*) and where it moves to is the **goal** (*to New Orleans*), as in *We drove from Chicago to New Orleans*. When we talk about transferring money *from savings to checking*, the source is *savings* and the goal is *checking*.

All these semantic roles are illustrated in the following scenario. Note that a single entity (e.g. *George*) can appear in several different semantic roles.

Mary	*saw*	*a fly*	*on the wall.*
EXPERIENCER		THEME	LOCATION
She	*borrowed*	*a magazine*	*from George.*
AGENT		THEME	SOURCE
She	*squashed*	*the bug*	*with the magazine.*
AGENT		THEME	INSTRUMENT.
She	*handed*	*the magazine*	*back to George.*
AGENT		THEME	GOAL
"Gee thanks," said		*George.*	
		AGENT	

Lexical relations

Not only can words be treated as containers of meaning, or as fulfilling roles in events, they can also have "relationships" with each other. In everyday talk, we often explain the meanings of words in terms of their relationships. If we're asked the meaning of the word *conceal*, for example, we might simply say, "It's the same as *hide*," or give the meaning of *shallow* as "the opposite of *deep*," or the meaning of *pine* as "a kind of *tree*." In doing so, we are characterizing the meaning of each word, not in terms of its component features, but in terms of its relationship to other words. This approach is used in the semantic description of language and treated as the analysis of **lexical relations**. The lexical relations we have just exemplified are synonymy (*conceal/hide*), antonymy (*shallow/deep*) and hyponymy (*pine/tree*).

Synonymy

Two or more words with very closely related meanings are called **synonyms**. They can often, though not always, be substituted for each other in sentences. In the appropriate circumstances, we can say, *What was his answer?* or *What was his reply?* with much the same meaning. Other common examples of synonyms are the pairs:

almost/nearly	*big/large*	*broad/wide*	*buy/purchase*
cab/taxi	*car/automobile*	*couch/sofa*	*freedom/liberty*

We should keep in mind that the idea of "sameness" of meaning used in discussing synonymy is not necessarily "total sameness." There are many occasions when one word is appropriate in a sentence, but its synonym would be odd. For example, whereas the word *answer* fits in the sentence *Sandy had only one answer correct on the test*, the word *reply* would sound odd. Although *broad* and *wide* can both be used to describe a street in a similar way, we only talk about being *in broad agreement* (not *wide*) and *in the whole wide world* (not *broad*). There are also regional differences in the use of synonymous pairs, with *candy, chips*, *diaper* and *gasoline* in American English being equivalents of *sweets*, *crisps*, *nappy* and *petrol* in British English.

Synonymous forms may also differ in terms of formal versus informal uses. The sentence *My father purchased a large automobile* has virtually the same meaning as *My dad bought a big car,* with four synonymous replacements, but the second version sounds much more casual or informal than the first.

Antonymy

Two forms with opposite meanings are called **antonyms**. Some common examples are the pairs:

alive/dead	*big/small*	*enter/exit*	*fast/slow*	*happy/sad*	*hot/cold*
long/short	*male/female*	*married/single*	*old/new*	*rich/poor*	*true/false*

Antonyms are usually divided into two main types, "gradable" (opposites along a scale) and "non-gradable" (direct opposites). We can use **gradable antonyms** in comparative constructions like *I'm smaller than you and slower, sadder, colder, shorter and older, but richer.* Also, the negative of one member of a gradable pair does not necessarily imply the other. For example, the sentence *My car isn't old* doesn't have to mean *My car is new.*

With **non-gradable antonyms** (also called "complementary pairs"), comparative constructions are not normally used. We don't typically describe someone as *deader* or *more dead* than another. Also, using the "negative test," we can see that the negative of one member of a non-gradable pair does imply the other member. That is, *My grandparents aren't alive* does indeed mean *My grandparents are dead*. Other non-gradable antonyms are the pairs: *male/female, married/single* and *true/false.*

Although we can use the "negative test" to identify non-gradable antonyms in a language, we usually avoid describing one member of an antonymous pair as the negative of the other. For example, while *undress* can be treated as the opposite of *dress*, it doesn't mean "not dress." It actually means "do the reverse of dress." Antonyms of this type are called **reversives**. Other common examples are *enter/exit*, *pack/unpack*, *lengthen/shorten*, *raise/lower*, *tie/untie.*

co-hyponyms of the superordinate term *injure* and the verbs *bake*, *boil*, *fry*, and *grill* as co-hyponyms of the superordinate *cook*. For a lot of people, *microwave* has become another one.

Prototypes

While the words *canary*, *cormorant*, *dove*, *duck*, *flamingo*, *parrot*, *pelican* and *robin* are all equally co-hyponyms of the superordinate *bird*, they are not all considered to be equally good examples of the category "bird." According to some researchers, the most characteristic instance of the category "bird" is *robin*. The idea of "the characteristic instance" of a category is known as the **prototype**. The concept of a prototype helps explain the meaning of certain words, like *bird*, not in terms of component features (e.g. "has feathers," "has wings"), but in terms of resemblance to the clearest example. Thus, we might wonder if *ostrich* or *penguin* should be hyponyms of *bird* (technically they are), but we have no trouble deciding about *sparrow* or *pigeon*. These last two are much closer to the prototype.

Given the category label *furniture*, we are quick to recognize *chair* as a better example than *bench* or *stool*. Given *clothing*, people recognize *shirts* quicker than *shoes*, and given *vegetable*, they accept *carrot* before *potato* or *turnip*. It is clear that there is some general pattern to the categorization process involved in prototypes and that it determines our interpretation of word meaning. However, this is one area where individual experience can lead to substantial variation in interpretation and people may disagree over the categorization of a word like *avocado* or *tomato* as fruit or vegetable. These words seem to be treated as co-hyponyms of both *fruit* and *vegetable* in different contexts.

Homophones and homonyms

When two or more different (written) forms have the same pronunciation, they are described as **homophones**. Common English examples are *bare/bear*, *meat/meet*, *flour/flower*, *pail/pale*, *right/write*, *sew/so*, *to/too/two*.

We use the term **homonyms** when one form (written or spoken) has two or more unrelated meanings, as in these examples:

bat (flying creature) – *bat* (used in sports)
mole (on skin) – *mole* (small animal)
pen (writing instrument) – *pen* (enclosed space)
race (contest of speed) – *race* (ethnic group)
sole (single) – *sole* (part of foot or shoe)

The temptation is to think that the two types of *bat* must be related in meaning. They are not. Homonyms are words that have separate histories and meanings, but have accidentally come to have exactly the same form.

Polysemy

When we encounter two or more words with the same form and related meanings, we have what is technically known as **polysemy**. Polysemy (from Greek *poly* "many" and *semy* "meanings") can be defined as one form (written or spoken) having multiple meanings that are all related by extension. Examples are the word *head*, used to refer to the object on top of your body, froth on top of a glass of beer, person at the top of a company or department or school, and many other things. Other examples of polysemy are *foot* (of a person, of a bed, of a mountain), *mouth* (part of a face, a cave, a river) or *run* (person does, water does, colors do).

If we aren't sure whether different uses of a single word are examples of homonymy or polsemy, we can check in a dictionary. If the word has multiple meanings (i.e. it's polysemous), then there will be a single entry, with a numbered list of the different meanings of that word. If two words are treated as homonyms, they will typically have two separate entries. In most dictionaries, *bat*, *mail*, *mole* and *sole* are clearly treated as homonyms whereas *face*, *foot*, *get*, *head* and *run* are treated as examples of polysemy.

Of course, it is possible for two forms to be distinguished via homonymy and for one of the forms also to have various uses via polysemy. The words *date* (= a thing we can eat) and *date* (= a point in time) are homonyms. However, the "point in time" kind of *date* is polysemous in terms of a particular day and month (= on a letter), an arranged meeting time (= an appointment), a social meeting (= with someone we like), and even a person (= that person we like). So the question *How was your date?* could have a number of different interpretations.

Word play

These last three lexical relations are the basis of a lot of word play, usually for humorous effect. In the nursery rhyme *Mary had a little lamb*, we think of a small animal, but in the comic version *Mary had a little lamb, some rice and vegetables*, we think of a small amount of meat. The polysemy of *lamb* allows the two interpretations. It is recognizing the polysemy of *leg* and *foot* in the riddle *What has four legs, but only one foot?* that leads to a solution (*a bed*).

We can make sense of another riddle *Why are trees often mistaken for dogs?* by recognizing the homonymy in the answer: *Because of their bark*. Shakespeare used homophones (*sun/son*) for word play in the first lines of the play *Richard III*:

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York.

And if you are asked the following question: *Why is 6 afraid of 7?*, you can understand why the answer is funny (*Because 789*) by identifying the homophones.

Metonymy

The relatedness of meaning found in polysemy is essentially based on similarity. The *head* of a company is similar to the *head* of a person on top of and controlling the body. There is another type of relationship between words, based simply on a close connection in everyday experience. That close connection can be based on a container–contents relation (*bottle/water*, *can/juice*), a whole–part relation (*car/wheels*, *house/roof*) or a representative–symbol relationship (*king/crown*, *the President/the White House*). Using one of these words to refer to the other is an example of **metonymy**.

It is our familiarity with metonymy that makes it possible for us to understand *He drank the whole bottle*, although it sounds absurd literally (i.e. he drank the liquid, not the glass object). We also accept *The White House has announced* . . . or *Downing Street protested* . . . without being puzzled that buildings appear to be talking. We use metonymy when we talk about *filling up the car*, *answering the door*, *boiling a kettle*, *giving someone a hand* or *needing some wheels*.

Collocation

One final aspect of our knowledge of words, and how they are used, has nothing to do with any of the factors considered so far. As mature speakers of a language, we all know which words tend to occur with other words. If you ask a thousand people what they think of when you say *hammer*, more than half will say *nail*. If you say *table*, they'll mostly say *chair*, and *butter* elicits *bread*, *needle* elicits *thread* and *salt* elicits *pepper*. One way we seem to organize our knowledge of words is simply on the basis of **collocation**, or frequently occurring together.

In recent years, the study of which words occur together, and their frequency of co-occurrence, has received a lot more attention in **corpus linguistics**. A corpus is a large collection of texts, spoken or written, typically stored as a database in a computer. Those doing corpus linguistics can then use the database to find out how often specific words or phrases occur and what types of collocations are most common. Some of the most common collocations are actually everyday phrases which may consist of several words frequently used together, as in *I don't know what to do* (six words), *you know what I mean* (five words) or *they don't want to* (four words).

One investigation looked at 84 occurrences of the phrase *true feelings* in a corpus. A very small sample is shown here. After looking at the types of verbs (e.g. *deny*, *try to communicate*) used with this phrase, the investigator noted that "English speakers use the phrase with *true feelings* when they want to give the meaning of reluctance to express deeply felt emotions" (Sinclair, 2003: 148).

(1) *more accustomed to denying our true feelings, avoiding reflection and self-*
(2) *We try to communicate our true feelings to those around us, and we are*
(3) *the ability to express our true feelings and creativity because we are*
(4) *we appease others, deny our true feelings, and conform, I suspected the*
(5) *more of us in there, of our true feelings, rather than just ranting on*

Research of this type provides more evidence that our understanding of what words and phrases mean is tied to the contexts in which they are typically used. We will look at other aspects of the role of context in the interpretation of meaning in Chapter 10.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1 Using semantic features, how would you explain the oddness of these sentences?
(a) *The television drank my water.*
(b) *His dog writes poetry.*

2 How is the term "prototype" used in semantics?

3 Identify the semantic roles of the seven noun phrases in this sentence.

With her new golf club, Anne Marshall whacked the ball from the woods to the grassy area near the hole and she suddenly felt invincible.

4 What is the basic lexical relation between each pair of words listed here?

(a) *assemble/disassemble*	**(c)** *dog/schnauzer*	**(g)** *move/run*
(b) *damp/moist*	**(d)** *furniture/table*	**(h)** *peace/piece*
(c) *deep/shallow*	**(f)** *married/single*	**(i)** *pen/pen*

5 Which of the following opposites are gradable, non-gradable, or reversive?

(a) *absent/present*	**(c)** *fail/pass*	**(e)** *fill it/empty it*
(b) *appear/disappear*	**(d)** *fair/unfair*	**(f)** *high/low*

6 Are these underlined words best described as examples of polysemy or metonymy?
(a) *The pen is mightier than the sword.*
(b) *I had to park on the shoulder of the road.*
(c) *Yes, I love those. I ate a whole box on Sunday!*
(d) *The bookstore has some new titles in linguistics.*
(e) *Computer chips created an important new technology*
(f) *I'm going to sue your ass!*
(g) *I think that kind of music was called new wave.*

TASKS

A What is the connection between an English doctor called Peter Mark Roget and the study of lexical relations?

B In this chapter, we discussed metonymy, but not metaphor. What is the difference between these two ways of using words?

C The adjective pairs listed here are antonyms with a "marked" and "unmarked" member in each pair. Can you list the unmarked members and explain your choices?

big/small	***heavy/light***
empty/full	***old/young***
expensive/inexpensive	***possible/impossible***
fast/slow	***short/tall***
happy/unhappy	***strong/weak***

CHAPTER 10
Pragmatics

In the late 1960s, two elderly American tourists who had been touring Scotland reported that, in their travels, they had come to a Scottish town in which there was a great ruined cathedral. As they stood in the ruins, they saw a small boy and they asked him when the cathedral had been so badly damaged. He replied *in the war*. Their immediate interpretation, in the 1960s, was that he must be referring to the Second World War which had ended only twenty years earlier. But then they thought that the ruins looked as if they had been in their dilapidated state for much longer than that, so they asked the boy which war he meant. He replied *the war with the English*, which, they eventually discovered, had formally ended in 1745.

Brown (1998)

In the previous chapter, we focused on conceptual meaning and the relationships between words. There are other aspects of meaning that depend more on context and the communicative intentions of speakers. In Gill Brown's story, the American tourists and the Scottish boy seem to be using the word *war* with essentially the same basic meaning. However, the boy was using the word to refer to something the tourists didn't expect, hence the initial misunderstanding. Communication clearly depends on not only recognizing the meaning of words in an utterance, but also recognizing what speakers mean by their utterances. The study of what speakers mean, or "speaker meaning," is called **pragmatics**.

Pragmatics

In many ways, pragmatics is the study of "invisible" meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn't actually said or written. In order for that to happen, speakers (or writers) must be able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectations when they try to communicate. The investigation of those assumptions and expectations provides us with some insights into how we understand more than just the linguistic content of utterances. From the perspective of pragmatics, more is always being communicated than is said.

There are lots of illustrations of this pragmatic principle. Driving by a parking garage, you may see a large sign like the one in the picture (Figure 10.1). You read the sign, knowing what each of the words means and what the sign as a whole means. However, you don't normally think that the sign is advertising a place where you can park your "heated attendant." (You take an attendant, you heat him/her up, and this is where you can park him/her.) Alternatively, the sign may indicate a place where parking will be carried out by attendants who have been heated. (Maybe they will be more cheerful.)

The words in the sign may allow these interpretations, but we would normally understand that we can park a car in this place, that it's a heated area, and that there will

Figure 10.1

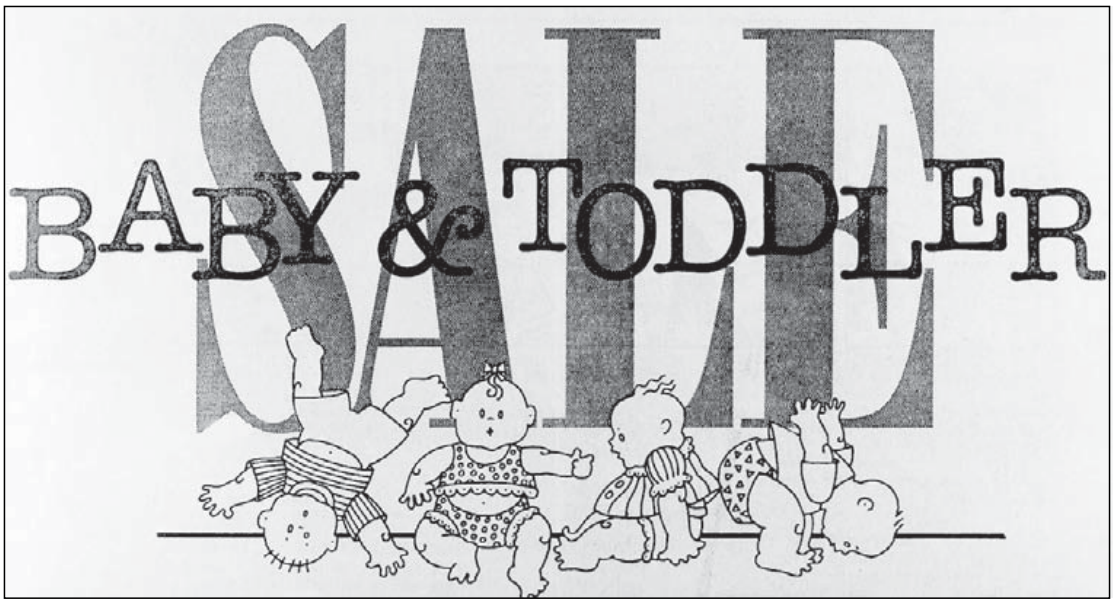


Figure 10.2

be an attendant to look after the car. So, how do we decide that the sign means this when the sign doesn't even have the word *car* on it? We must use the meanings of the words, the context in which they occur, and some pre-existing knowledge of what would be a likely message as we work toward a reasonable interpretation of what the producer of the sign intended it to convey. Our interpretation of the "meaning" of the sign is not based solely on the words, but on what we think the writer intended to communicate.

We can illustrate a similar process with our second example (Figure 10.2), taken from a newspaper advertisement. If we only think about the meaning of the phrase as a combination of the meanings of the words, using *Furniture Sale* as an analogy, we might arrive at an interpretation in which someone is announcing the sale of some very young children. Of course, we resist this possible interpretation and recognize instead that it is advertising a sale of clothes for those young children. The word *clothes* doesn't appear in the message, but we can bring that idea to our interpretation of the message as we work out what the advertiser intended us to understand. We are actively involved in creating an interpretation of what we read and hear.

Context

In our discussion of the last two examples, we emphasized the influence of context. There are different kinds of context. There is obviously the **physical context**, which can be the location "out there" where we encounter words and phrases (e.g. the word *BANK* on a wall of a building is understood as a financial institution). There is also the **linguistic context**, also known as **co-text**. The co-text of a word is the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence. If the word *bank* is used with other words like *steep* or *overgrown*, we have no problem deciding which type of *bank* is meant.

Or, when someone says that she has to *get to the bank to withdraw some cash*, the co-text tells us which type of *bank* is intended.

Deixis

There are some very common words in our language that can't be interpreted at all if we don't know the context. These are words such as *here* and *there*, *this* or *that*, *now* or *then*, *yesterday*, *today* or *tomorrow*, as well as pronouns such as *you*, *me*, *she*, *him*, *it*, *them*. Some sentences of English are virtually impossible to understand if we don't know who is speaking, about whom, where and when. For example: *You'll have to bring it back tomorrow because she isn't here today.*

Out of context, this sentence is really vague. It contains a large number of expressions (*you*, *it*, *tomorrow*, *she*, *here*, *today*) that rely on knowledge of the local context for their interpretation (i.e. that the delivery driver will have to return on February 15th to 660 College Drive with the long box labeled "flowers, handle with care" addressed to Lisa Landry). Expressions such as *tomorrow* and *here* are technically known as **deictic** (/daɪktɪk/) **expressions**, from the Greek word **deixis**, which means "pointing" via language. We use deixis to point to people (*him*, *them*, *those things*), places (*here*, *there*, *after this*) and times (*now*, *then*, *next week*).

Person deixis: *me*, *you*, *him*, *her*, *us*, *them*, *that woman*, *those idiots*
Spatial deixis: *here*, *there*, *beside you*, *near that*, *above your head*
Temporal deixis: *now*, *then*, *last week*, *later*, *tomorrow*, *yesterday*

All these deictic expressions have to be interpreted in terms of which person, place or time the speaker has in mind. We make a broad distinction between what is close to the speaker (*this*, *here*, *now*) and what is distant (*that*, *there*, *then*). We can also indicate whether movement is away from the speaker (*go*) or toward the speaker (*come*). Just think about telling someone to *Go to bed* versus *Come to bed*. Deixis can even be entertaining. The bar owner who puts up a big sign that reads *Free Beer Tomorrow* (to get you to return to the bar) can always claim that you are just one day too early for the free drink.

Reference

In discussing deixis, we assumed that the use of words to refer to people, places and times was a simple matter. However, words themselves don't refer to anything. People refer. We have to define **reference** as an act by which a speaker (or writer) uses language to enable a listener (or reader) to identify something. To perform an act of reference, we can use proper nouns (*Chomsky*, *Jennifer*, *Whiskas*), other nouns in phrases (*a writer*, *my friend*, *the cat*) or pronouns (*he*, *she*, *it*). We sometimes assume that these words identify someone or something uniquely, but it is more accurate to say that, for each word or phrase, there is a "range of reference." The words *Jennifer*

or *friend* or *she* can be used to refer to many entities in the world. As we observed earlier, an expression such as *the war* doesn't directly identify anything by itself, because its reference depends on who is using it.

We can also refer to things when we're not sure what to call them. We can use expressions such as *the blue thing* and *that icky stuff* and we can even invent names. For instance, there was a man who always drove his motorcycle fast and loud through my neighborhood and was locally referred to as *Mr. Kawasaki*. In this case, a brand name for a motorcycle is being used to refer to a person.

Inference

As in the "Mr. Kawasaki" example, a successful act of reference depends more on the listener/reader's ability to recognize what the speaker/writer means than on the listener's "dictionary" knowledge of a word that is used. For example, in a restaurant, one waiter can ask another, *Where's the spinach salad sitting?* and receive the reply, *He's sitting by the door.* If you're studying linguistics, you might ask someone, *Can I look at your Chomsky?* and get the response, *Sure, it's on the shelf over there.* And when you hear that *Jennifer is wearing Calvin Klein*, you avoid imagining someone called Calvin draped over poor Jennifer and recognize that they're talking about her clothing.

These examples make it clear that we can use names associated with things (*salad*) to refer to people, and use names of people (*Chomsky*, *Calvin Klein*) to refer to things. The key process here is called **inference**. An inference is additional information used by the listener to create a connection between what is said and what must be meant. In the *Chomsky* example, the listener has to operate with the inference: "if X is the name of the writer of a book, then X can be used to identify a copy of a book by that writer." Similar types of inferences are necessary to understand someone who says that *Picasso is in the museum*, *We saw Shakespeare in London*, *Mozart was playing in the background* and *The bride wore Giorgio Armani*.

Anaphora

We usually make a distinction between how we introduce new referents (*a puppy*) and how we refer back to them (*the puppy*, *it*).

We saw a funny home video about a boy washing a puppy in a small bath.
The puppy started struggling and shaking and the boy got really wet.
When he let go, it jumped out of the bath and ran away.

In this type of referential relationship, the second (or subsequent) referring expression is an example of **anaphora** ("referring back"). The first mention is called the **antecedent**. So, in our example, *a boy*, *a puppy* and *a small bath* are antecedents and *The puppy*, *the boy*, *he*, *it* and *the bath* are anaphoric expressions.

There is a much less common pattern, called **cataphora**, which reverses the antecedent–anaphora relationship by beginning with a pronoun (*It*), then later revealing more specific information. This device is more common in stories, as in this beginning: *It suddenly appeared on the path a little ahead of me, staring in my direction and sniffing the air. An enormous grizzly bear was checking me out*.

Anaphora is, however, the more common pattern and can be defined as subsequent reference to an already introduced entity. Mostly we use anaphora in texts to maintain reference. The connection between an antecedent and an anaphoric expression is created by use of a pronoun (*it*), or a phrase with *the* plus the antecedent noun (*the puppy*), or another noun that is related to the antecedent in some way (*The little dog ran out of the room*). The connection between antecedents and anaphoric expressions is often based on inference, as in these examples:

We found a house to rent, but the kitchen was very small.
I got on a bus and asked the driver if it went near the downtown area.

In the first example, we must make an inference like "if X is a house, then X has a kitchen" in order to interpret the connection between antecedent *a house* and anaphoric expression *the kitchen*. In the second example, we must make an inference like "if X is a bus, then X has a driver" in order to make the connection between *a bus* and *the driver*. In some cases, the antecedent can be a verb, as in: *The victim was shot twice, but the gun was never recovered*. Here the inference is that any "shooting" event must involve a gun.

We have used the term "inference" here to describe what the listener (or reader) does. When we talk about an assumption made by the speaker (or writer), we usually talk about a "presupposition."

Presupposition

When we use a referring expression like *this*, *he* or *Jennifer*, we usually assume that our listeners can recognize which referent is intended. In a more general way, we design our linguistic messages on the basis of large-scale assumptions about what our listeners already know. Some of these assumptions may be mistaken, of course, but mostly they're appropriate. What a speaker (or writer) assumes is true or known by a listener (or reader) can be described as a **presupposition**.

If someone tells you *Your brother is waiting outside*, there is an obvious presupposition that you have a brother. If you are asked *Why did you arrive late?*, there is a presupposition that you did arrive late. And if you are asked the question *When did you stop smoking?*, there are at least two presuppositions involved. In asking this question, the speaker presupposes that you used to smoke and that you no longer do so. Questions like this, with built-in presuppositions, are very useful devices for interrogators or trial lawyers. If the defendant is asked by the prosecutor, *Okay,*

Mr. Buckingham, how fast were you going when you went through the red light?, there is a presupposition that Mr. Buckingham did in fact go through the red light. If he simply answers the *How fast* part of the question, by giving a speed, he is behaving as if the presupposition is correct.

One of the tests used to check for the presuppositions underlying sentences involves negating a sentence with a particular presupposition and checking if the presupposition remains true. Whether you say *My car is a wreck* or the negative version *My car is not a wreck*, the underlying presupposition (*I have a car*) remains true despite the fact that the two sentences have opposite meanings. This is called the "constancy under negation" test for identifying a presupposition. If someone says, *I used to regret marrying him, but I don't regret marrying him now,* the presupposition (*I married him*) remains constant even though the verb *regret* changes from affirmative to negative.

Speech acts

We have been considering ways in which we interpret the meaning of an utterance in terms of what the speaker intended to convey. We have not yet considered the fact that we usually know how the speaker intends us to "take" (or "interpret the function of") what is said. In very general terms, we can usually recognize the type of "action" performed by a speaker with the utterance. We use the term **speech act** to describe actions such as "requesting," "commanding," "questioning" or "informing." We can define a speech act as the action performed by a speaker with an utterance. If you say, *I'll be there at six*, you are not just speaking, you seem to be performing the speech act of "promising."

Direct and indirect speech acts

We usually use certain syntactic structures with the functions listed beside them in Table 10.1.

When an interrogative structure such as *Did you . . .?*, *Are they . . .?* or *Can we . . .?* is used with the function of a question, it is described as a **direct speech act**. For example, when we don't know something and we ask someone to provide the information, we produce a direct speech act such as *Can you ride a bicycle?*.

Compare that utterance with *Can you pass the salt?*. In this second example, we are not really asking a question about someone's ability. In fact, we don't normally

Table 10.1

	Structures	Functions
Did you eat the pizza?	Interrogative	Question
Eat the pizza (please)!	Imperative	Command (Request)
You ate the pizza.	Declarative	Statement

use this structure as a question at all. We normally use it to make a request. That is, we are using a structure associated with the function of a question, but in this case with the function of a request. This is an example of an **indirect speech act**. Whenever one of the structures in the set above is used to perform a function other than the one listed beside it on the same line, the result is an indirect speech act.

The utterance *You left the door open* has a declarative structure and, as a direct speech act, would be used to make a statement. However, if you say this to someone who has just come in (and it's cold outside), you would probably want that person to close the door. You aren't using the imperative structure. You are using a declarative structure to make a request. It's another indirect speech act.

It is possible to have strange effects if one person fails to recognize another person's indirect speech act. Consider the following scene. A visitor to a city, carrying his luggage, looking lost, stops a passer-by.

VISITOR: *Excuse me. Do you know where the Ambassador Hotel is?*
PASSER-BY: *Oh sure, I know where it is.* (and walks away)

In this scene, the visitor uses a form normally associated with a question (*Do you know . . .?*), and the passer-by answers that question literally (*I know . . .*). That is, the passer-by is acting as if the utterance was a direct speech act instead of an indirect speech act used as a request for directions.

The main reason we use indirect speech acts seems to be that actions such as requests, presented in an indirect way (*Could you open that door for me?*), are generally more polite in our society than direct speech acts (*Open that door for me!*). Exactly why they are more polite is based on some complex assumptions.

Politeness

We can think of politeness in general terms as having to do with ideas like being tactful, modest and nice to other people. In the study of linguistic politeness, the most relevant concept is "face." Your **face**, in pragmatics, is your public self-image. This is the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize. **Politeness** can be defined as showing awareness and consideration of another person's face.

If you say something that represents a threat to another person's self-image, that is called a **face-threatening act**. For example, if you use a direct speech act to get someone to do something (*Give me that paper!*), you are behaving as if you have more social power than the other person. If you don't actually have that social power (e.g. you're not a military officer or prison warden), then you are performing a face-threatening act. An indirect speech act, in the form associated with a question (*Could you pass me that paper?*), removes the assumption of social power. You're only asking

if it's possible. This makes your request less threatening to the other person's face. Whenever you say something that lessens the possible threat to another's face, it can be described as a **face-saving act**.

Negative and positive face

We have both a negative face and a positive face. (Note that "negative" doesn't mean "bad" here, it's simply the opposite of "positive.") **Negative face** is the need to be independent and free from imposition. **Positive face** is the need to be connected, to belong, to be a member of the group. So, a face-saving act that emphasizes a person's negative face will show concern about imposition (*I'm sorry to bother you . . .*; *I know you're busy, but . . .*). A face-saving act that emphasizes a person's positive face will show solidarity and draw attention to a common goal (*Let's do this together . . .*; *You and I have the same problem, so . . .*).

Ideas about the appropriate language to mark politeness differ substantially from one culture to the next. If you have grown up in a culture that has directness as a valued way of showing solidarity, and you use direct speech acts (*Give me that chair!*) to people whose culture is more oriented to indirectness and avoiding direct imposition, then you will be considered impolite. You, in turn, may think of the others as vague and unsure of whether they really want something or are just asking about it (*Are you using this chair?*). In either case, it is the pragmatics that is misunderstood and, unfortunately, more will often be communicated than is said.

Understanding how successful communication works is actually a process of interpreting not just what speakers say, but what they "intend to mean." We'll explore other aspects of this process in Chapter 11.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1 What kinds of deictic expressions (e.g. *We* = person deixis) are used here?
(a) *We went there last summer.*
(b) *I'm busy now so you can't stay here. Come back later.*

2 What are the anaphoric expressions in this sentence?

Dr. Foster gave Andy some medicine after he told her about his headaches and she advised him to take the pills three times a day until the pain went away.

3 What kind of inference is involved in interpreting each of these utterances?
(a) TEACHER: *You can borrow my Shakespeare.*
(b) WAITER: *The ham sandwich left without paying.*
(c) NURSE: *The hernia in room 5 wants to talk to the doctor.*
(d) DENTIST: *My eleven-thirty canceled so I had an early lunch.*

4 What is one obvious presupposition of a speaker who says:
(a) *Your clock isn't working.*
(b) *Where did he find the money?*
(c) *We regret buying that car.*
(d) *The king of France is bald.*

5 Someone stands between you and the TV set you're watching, so you decide to say one of the following. Identify which would be direct or indirect speech acts.

(a) ***Move!***
(b) ***You're in the way.***
(c) ***Could you please sit down?***
(d) ***Please get out of the way.***

6 In these examples, is the speaker appealing to positive or negative face?
(a) *If you're free, there's going to be a party at Yuri's place on Saturday.*
(b) *Let's go to the party at Yuri's place on Saturday. Everyone's invited.*

TASKS

A What do you think is meant by the statement: "A context is a psychological construct" (Sperber and Wilson, 1995)?

B Why is the concept of "deictic projection" necessary for the analysis of the following deictic expressions?
(1) On a telephone answering machine: *I am not here now*
(2) On a map/directory: *YOU ARE HERE*
(3) Watching a horse race: *Oh, no. I'm in last place.*
(4) In a car that won't start: *Maybe I'm out of gas.*
(5) Pointing to an empty chair in class: *Where is she today?*

CHAPTER 11
Discourse analysis

There's two types of favors, the big favor and the small favor. You can measure the size of the favor by the pause that a person takes after they ask you to "Do me a favor." Small favor – small pause. "Can you do me a favor, hand me that pencil." No pause at all. Big favors are, "Could you do me a favor . . ." Eight seconds go by. "Yeah? What?"

". . . well." The longer it takes them to get to it, the bigger the pain it's going to be.

Humans are the only species that do favors. Animals don't do favors. A lizard doesn't go up to a cockroach and say, "Could you do me a favor and hold still, I'd like to eat you alive." That's a big favor even with no pause.

Seinfeld (1993)

In the study of language, some of the most interesting observations are made, not in terms of the components of language, but in terms of the way language is used, even how pauses are used, as in Jerry Seinfeld's commentary. We have already considered some of the features of language in use when we discussed pragmatics in Chapter 10. We were, in effect, asking how it is that language-users successfully interpret what other language-users intend to convey. When we carry this investigation further and ask how we make sense of what we read, how we can recognize well-constructed texts as opposed to those that are jumbled or incoherent, how we understand speakers who communicate more than they say, and how we successfully take part in that complex activity called conversation, we are undertaking what is known as **discourse analysis**.

Discourse

The word "discourse" is usually defined as "language beyond the sentence" and so the analysis of discourse is typically concerned with the study of language in texts and conversation. In many of the preceding chapters, when we were concentrating on linguistic description, we were concerned with the accurate representation of the forms and structures. However, as language-users, we are capable of more than simply recognizing correct versus incorrect forms and structures. We can cope with fragments in newspaper headlines such as *Trains collide, two die*, and know that what happened in the first part was the cause of what happened in the second part. We can also make sense of notices like *No shoes, no service*, on shop windows in summer, understanding that a conditional relation exists between the two parts ("If you are wearing no shoes, you will receive no service"). We have the ability to create complex discourse interpretations of fragmentary linguistic messages.

Interpreting discourse

We can even cope with texts, written in English, which we couldn't produce ourselves and which appear to break a lot of the rules of the English language. Yet we can build an interpretation. The following example, provided by Eric Nelson, is from an essay by a student learning English and contains all kinds of errors, yet it can be understood.

My Town

My natal was in a small town, very close to Riyadh capital of Saudi Arabia. The distant between my town and Riyadh 7 miles exactly. The name of this Almasani that means in English Factories. It takes this name from the peopl's carrer. In my childhood I remmeber the people live. It was very simple. Most the people was farmer.

This example may serve to illustrate a simple point about the way we react to language that contains ungrammatical forms. Rather than simply reject the text as ungrammatical, we try to make sense of it. That is, we attempt to arrive at a reasonable interpretation of what the writer intended to convey. (Most people say they understand the "My Town" text quite easily.)

It is this effort to interpret (or to be interpreted), and how we accomplish it, that are the key elements investigated in the study of discourse. To arrive at an interpretation, and to make our messages interpretable, we certainly rely on what we know about linguistic form and structure. But, as language-users, we have more knowledge than that.

Cohesion

We know, for example, that texts must have a certain structure that depends on factors quite different from those required in the structure of a single sentence. Some of those factors are described in terms of **cohesion**, or the ties and connections that exist within texts. A number of those types of **cohesive ties** can be identified in the following paragraph.

My father once bought a Lincoln convertible. He did it by saving every penny he could. That car would be worth a fortune nowadays. However, he sold it to help pay for my college education. Sometimes I think I'd rather have the convertible.

There are connections here in the use of words to maintain reference to the same people and things throughout: *father – he – he – he*; *my – my – I*; *Lincoln – it*. There are connections between phrases such as: *a Lincoln convertible – that car – the convertible*. There are more general connections created by terms that share a common element of meaning, such as "money" (*bought – saving – penny – worth a fortune – sold – pay*) and "time" *(once – nowadays – sometimes*). There is also a connector (*However*) that marks the relationship of what follows to what went before. The verb tenses in the first four sentences are all in the past, creating a connection between those events, and a different time is indicated by the present tense of the final sentence.

Analysis of these cohesive ties within a text gives us some insight into how writers structure what they want to say. An appropriate number of cohesive ties may be a crucial factor in our judgments on whether something is well written or not. It has also been noted that the conventions of cohesive structure differ from one language to the next, one source of difficulty encountered in translating texts.

However, by itself, cohesion would not be sufficient to enable us to make sense of what we read. It is quite easy to create a highly cohesive text that has a lot of connections between the sentences, but is very difficult to interpret. Note that the following text has a series of connections in *Lincoln – the car*, *red – that color*, *her – she*, and *letters – a letter*.

My father bought a Lincoln convertible. The car driven by the police was red. That color doesn't suit her. She consists of three letters. However, a letter isn't as fast as a telephone call.

It becomes clear from this type of example that the "connectedness" we experience in our interpretation of normal texts is not simply based on connections between words. There must be another factor that helps us distinguish connected texts that make sense from those that do not. This factor is usually described as "coherence."

Coherence

The key to the concept of **coherence** ("everything fitting together well") is not something that exists in words or structures, but something that exists in people. It is people who "make sense" of what they read and hear. They try to arrive at an interpretation that is in line with their experience of the way the world is. Indeed, our ability to make sense of what we read is probably only a small part of that general ability we have to make sense of what we perceive or experience in the world. You may have tried quite hard to make the last example fit some situation that accommodated all the details (involving a red car, a woman and a letter) into a single coherent interpretation. In doing so, you would necessarily be involved in a process of filling in a lot of gaps that exist in the text. You would have to create meaningful connections that are not actually expressed by the words and sentences. This process is not restricted to trying to understand "odd" texts. In one way or another, it seems to be involved in our interpretation of all discourse.

It is certainly present in the interpretation of casual conversation. We are continually taking part in conversational interactions where a great deal of what is meant is not actually present in what is said. Perhaps it is the ease with which we ordinarily anticipate each other's intentions that makes this whole complex process seem so unremarkable. Here is a good example, adapted from Widdowson (1978).

HER: *That's the telephone*
HIM: *I'm in the bath*
HER: *O.K.*

There are certainly no cohesive ties within this fragment of discourse. How does each of these people manage to make sense of what the other says? They do use the information contained in the sentences expressed, but there must be something else involved in the interpretation. It has been suggested that exchanges of this type are best understood in terms of the conventional actions performed by the speakers in such interactions. Drawing on concepts derived from the study of speech acts (introduced in Chapter 10), we can characterize the brief conversation in the following way.

She makes a request of him to perform action.
He states reason why he cannot comply with request.
She undertakes to perform action.

If this is a reasonable analysis of what took place in the conversation, then it is clear that language-users must have a lot of knowledge of how conversation works that is not simply "linguistic" knowledge.

Speech events

In exploring what it is we know about taking part in conversation, or any other speech event (e.g. debate, interview, various types of discussions), we quickly realize that

there is enormous variation in what people say and do in different circumstances. In order to begin to describe the sources of that variation, we would have to take account of a number of criteria. For example, we would have to specify the roles of speaker and hearer (or hearers) and their relationship(s), whether they were friends, strangers, men, women, young, old, of equal or unequal status, and many other factors. All of these factors will have an influence on what is said and how it is said. We would have to describe what the topic of conversation was and in what setting it took place. Some of the effects of these factors on the way language is used are explored in greater detail in Chapters 19 and 20. Yet, even when we have described all these factors, we will still not have analyzed the actual structure of the conversation itself. As language-users, in a particular culture, we clearly have quite sophisticated knowledge of how conversation works.

Conversation analysis

In simple terms, English conversation can be described as an activity in which, for the most part, two or more people take **turns** at speaking. Typically, only one person speaks at a time and there tends to be an avoidance of silence between speaking turns. (This is not true in all situations or societies.) If more than one participant tries to talk at the same time, one of them usually stops, as in the following example, where A stops until B has finished.

A: *Didn't you* [*know wh-*
B: [*But he must've been there by two*
A: *Yes but you knew where he was going*

(A small square bracket [is conventionally used to indicate a place where simultaneous or overlapping speech occurs.)

For the most part, participants wait until one speaker indicates that he or she has finished, usually by signaling a **completion point**. Speakers can mark their turns as complete in a number of ways: by asking a question, for example, or by pausing at the end of a completed syntactic structure like a phrase or sentence. Other participants can indicate that they want to take the speaking turn, also in a number of ways. They can start to make short sounds, usually repeated, while the speaker is talking, and often use body shifts or facial expressions to signal that they have something to say.

Turn-taking

There are different expectations of conversational style and different strategies of participation in conversation, which may result in slightly different conventions of **turn-taking**. One strategy, which may be overused by "long-winded" speakers or those who are used to "holding the floor," is designed to avoid having

normal completion points occur. We all use this strategy to some extent, usually in situations where we have to work out what we are trying to say while actually saying it.

If the normal expectation is that completion points are marked by the end of a sentence and a pause, then one way to "keep the turn" is to avoid having those two markers occur together. That is, don't pause at the end of sentences; make your sentences run on by using connectors like *and*, *and then*, *so*, *but*; place your pauses at points where the message is clearly incomplete; and preferably "fill" the pause with a hesitation marker such as *er*, *em*, *uh*, *ah*.

In the following example, note how the pauses (marked by . . .) are placed before and after verbs rather than at the end of sentences, making it difficult to get a clear sense of what this person is saying until we hear the part after each pause.

A: *that's their favorite restaurant because they . . . enjoy French food and when they were . . . in France they couldn't believe it that . . . you know that they had . . . that they had had better meals back home*

In the next example, speaker X produces **filled pauses** (with *em*, *er*, *you know*) after having almost lost the turn at his first brief hesitation.

X: *well that film really was . . .* [*wasn't what he was good at*
Y: [*when di-*
X: *I mean his other . . . em his later films were much more . . . er really more in the romantic style and that was more what what he was . . . you know . . . em best at doing*
Y: *so when did he make that one*

These types of strategies, by themselves, should not be considered undesirable or domineering. They are present in the conversational speech of most people and they are part of what makes conversation work. We recognize these subtle indicators as ways of organizing our turns and negotiating the intricate business of social interaction via language. In fact, one of the most noticeable features of conversational discourse in English is that it is generally very "co-operative." This observation has been formulated as a principle of conversation.

The co-operative principle

An underlying assumption in most conversational exchanges seems to be that the participants are co-operating with each other. This principle, together with four maxims that we expect our conversational partners to obey, was first described by the philosopher Paul Grice (1975: 45). The **co-operative principle** is presented in the following way, together with what are often called the "Gricean maxims."

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

The **Quantity** maxim: Make your contribution as informative as is required, but not more, or less, than is required.

The **Quality** maxim: Do not say that which you believe to be false or for which you lack adequate evidence.

The **Relation** maxim: Be relevant.

The **Manner** maxim: Be clear, brief and orderly.

In simple terms, we expect our conversational partners to make succinct, honest, relevant and clear contributions to the interaction and to signal to us in some way if these maxims are not being followed in particular circumstances. It is certainly true that, on occasion, we can experience conversational exchanges in which the co-operative principle may not seem to be in operation. However, this general description of the normal expectations we have in conversation helps to explain a number of regular features in the way people say things. For example, during their lunch break, one woman asks another how she likes the sandwich she is eating and receives the following answer.

Oh, a sandwich is a sandwich.

In logical terms, this reply appears to have no communicative value since it states something obvious, doesn't seem to be informative at all and hence would appear to be a **tautology**. Repeating a phrase that adds nothing would hardly count as an appropriate answer to a question. However, if the woman is being co-operative and adhering to the Quantity maxim about being "as informative as is required," then the listener must assume that her friend is communicating something. Given the opportunity to evaluate the sandwich, her friend has responded without an explicit evaluation, thereby implying that she has no opinion, good or bad, to express. That is, her friend has communicated that the sandwich isn't worth talking about.

Hedges

We use certain types of expressions, called **hedges**, to show that we are concerned about following the maxims while being co-operative participants in conversation. Hedges can be defined as words or phrases used to indicate that we're not really sure that what we're saying is sufficiently correct or complete. We can use *sort of* or *kind of* as hedges on the accuracy of our statements, as in descriptions such as *His hair was kind of long* or *The book cover is sort of yellow.* These are examples of hedges on the Quality maxim. Other examples would include the following expressions that people sometimes use as they begin a conversational contribution.

As far as I know, . . .
Correct me if I'm wrong, but . . .
*I'm not absolutely sure, but . . .*z

We also take care to indicate that what we report is something we *think* or *feel* (not *know*), is *possible* or *likely* (not *certain*), and *may* or *could* (not *must*) happen. Hence the difference between saying *Jackson is guilty* and *I think it's possible that Jackson may be guilty*. In the first version, we will be assumed to have very good evidence for the statement.

Implicatures

When we try to analyze how hedges work, we usually talk about speakers implying something that is not said. Similarly, in considering what the woman meant by *a sandwich is a sandwich*, we decided that she was implying that the sandwich wasn't worth talking about. With the co-operative principle and the maxims as guides, we can start to work out how people actually decide that someone is "implying" something in conversation. Consider the following example.

CAROL: *Are you coming to the party tonight?*
LARA: *I've got an exam tomorrow*

On the face of it, Lara's statement is not an answer to Carol's question. Lara doesn't say *Yes* or *No*. Yet Carol will interpret the statement as meaning "No" or "Probably not." How can we account for this ability to grasp one meaning from a sentence that, in a literal sense, means something else? It seems to depend on the assumption that Lara is being relevant and informative, adhering to the maxims of Relation and Quantity. (Try to imagine Carol's reaction if Lara had said something like *Roses are red, you know.*) Given that Lara's original answer contains relevant information, Carol can work out that "exam tomorrow" conventionally involves "study tonight," and "study tonight" precludes "party tonight." Thus, Lara's answer is not simply a statement about tomorrow's activities, it contains an **implicature** (an additional conveyed meaning) concerning tonight's activities.

Background knowledge

It is noticeable that, in order to analyze the conversational implicature involved in Lara's statement, we had to describe some background knowledge (about exams, studying and partying) that must be shared by the conversational participants. Investigating how we use our background knowledge to arrive at interpretations of what we hear and read is a critical part of doing discourse analysis.

The processes involved in using background knowledge can be illustrated in the following exercise (from Sanford and Garrod, 1981). Begin with these sentences:

John was on his way to school last Friday.

He was really worried about the math lesson.

Most readers report that they think John is probably a schoolboy. Since this piece of information is not directly stated in the text, it must be an inference. Other inferences, for different readers, are that John is walking or that he is on a bus. These inferences are clearly derived from our conventional knowledge, in our culture, about "going to school," and no reader has ever suggested that John is swimming or on a boat, though both are physically possible interpretations.

An interesting aspect of the reported inferences is that readers can quickly abandon them if they do not fit in with some subsequent information.

Last week he had been unable to control the class.

On encountering this sentence, most readers decide that John must be a teacher and that he is not very happy. Many report that he is probably driving a car to school.

It was unfair of the math teacher to leave him in charge.

Suddenly, John reverts to his schoolboy status, and the inference that he is a teacher is quickly abandoned. The final sentence of the text contains a surprise.

After all, it is not a normal part of a janitor's duties.

This type of text and manner of presentation, one sentence at a time, is rather artificial, of course. Yet the exercise involved does provide us with some insight into the ways in which we "build" interpretations of what we read by using more information than is presented in the words on the page. We actually create what the text is about, based on our expectations of what normally happens. To describe this phenomenon, researchers often use the concept of a "schema" or a "script."

Schemas and scripts

A **schema** is a general term for a conventional knowledge structure that exists in memory. We were using our conventional knowledge of what a school classroom is like, or a "classroom schema," as we tried to make sense of the previous example. We have many schemas (or schemata) that are used in the interpretation of what we experience and what we hear or read about. If you hear someone describe what happened during a visit to a supermarket, you don't have to be told what is in a supermarket. You already have a "supermarket schema" (food displayed on shelves, arranged in aisles, shopping carts and baskets, check-out counter, and other conventional features) as part of your background knowledge.

Similar in many ways to a schema is a **script**. A script is essentially a dynamic schema. That is, instead of the set of typical fixed features in a schema, a script has a series of conventional actions that take place. You have a script for "Going to the

dentist" and another script for "Going to the movies." We all have versions of an "Eating in a restaurant" script, which we can activate to make sense of this text.

Trying not to be out of the office for long, Suzy went into the nearest place, sat down and ordered an avocado sandwich. It was quite crowded, but the service was fast, so she left a good tip. Back in the office, things were not going well.

On the basis of our restaurant script, we would be able to say a number of things about the scene and events briefly described in this short text. For example, although the text doesn't have this information, we would assume that Suzy opened a door to get into the restaurant, that there were tables there, that she ate the sandwich, then she paid for it, and so on. The fact that information of this type can turn up in people's attempts to remember the text is further evidence of the existence of scripts. It is also a good indication of the fact that our understanding of what we read doesn't come directly from what words and sentences are on the page, but the interpretations we create, in our minds, of what we read.

Indeed, information is sometimes omitted from instructions on the assumption that everybody knows the script. This instruction is from a bottle of cough syrup.

Fill measure cup to line and repeat every 2 to 3 hours.

No, you've not just to keep filling the measure cup every 2 to 3 hours. Nor have you to rub the cough syrup on your neck or in your hair. You are expected to know the script and *drink* the stuff from the measure cup every 2 or 3 hours.

Clearly, our understanding of what we read is not only based on what we see on the page (language structures), but also on other things that we have in mind (knowledge structures) as we go about making sense of discourse.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1 How is the word "discourse" usually defined?

2 What is the basic difference between cohesion and coherence?

3 How do speakers mark completion points at the end of a turn?

4 What are hedges in discourse?

5 Which maxims do these speakers seem to be particularly careful about?

(a) *I may be mistaken, but I thought I saw a wedding ring on his finger.*

(b) *I won't bore you with all the details, but it wasn't a pleasant experience.*

6 In the study of discourse understanding, what are scripts?

TASKS

A In the analysis of discourse, what is "intertextuality"?

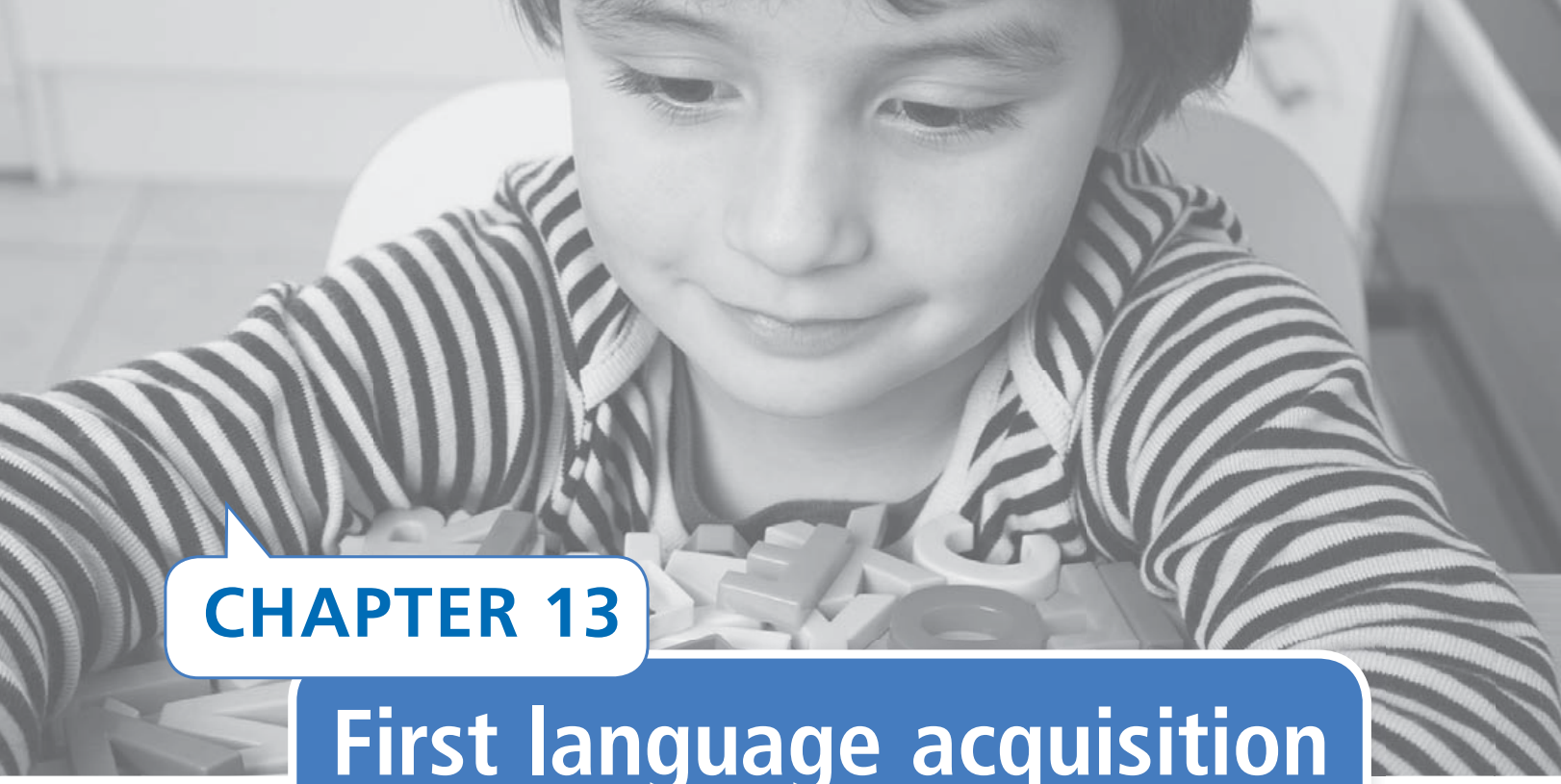
B In conversation analysis, what is the difference between a "preferred" response and a "dispreferred" response? How would you characterize the responses by *She* in these two examples?

(a) HE: *How about going for some coffee?*
SHE: *Oh . . . eh . . . I'd love to . . . but you see . . . I . . . I'm supposed to get this thing finished . . . you know*

(b) HE: *I think she's really sexy.*
SHE: *Well . . . er . . . I'm not sure . . . you may be right . . . but you see . . . other people probably don't go for all that . . . you know . . . all that make-up . . . so em sorry but I don't think so*

C The following extract is from a conversation between two women chatting about people they both knew in high school (Overstreet, 1999: 112–113). The phrase *or something* is used twice by Crystal in this extract. Is she adhering to the Co-operative Principle and the Quality maxim or not? How did you decide?

JULIE: *I can't remember any ge- guys in our grade that were gay.*
CRYSTAL: *Larry Brown an' an' John Murphy. I – huh I dunno, I heard John Murphy was dressed – was like a transvestite or something.*
JULIE: *You're kidding.*
CRYSTAL: *I – I dunno. That was a – an old rumor, I don't even know if it was true.*
JULIE: *That's funny.*
CRYSTAL: *Or cross-dresser or something*
JULIE: *Larry – Larry Brown is gay?*



CHAPTER 13
First language acquisition

CHILD: Want other one spoon, Daddy.
FATHER: You mean, you want the other spoon.
CHILD: Yes, I want other one spoon, please Daddy.
FATHER: Can you say "the other spoon"?
CHILD: Other . . . one . . . spoon.
FATHER: Say "other."
CHILD: Other.
FATHER: "Spoon."
CHILD: Spoon.
FATHER: "Other spoon."
CHILD: Other . . . spoon. Now give me other one spoon?

Braine (1971)

First language acquisition is remarkable for the speed with which it takes place. Long before a child starts school, he or she has become an extremely sophisticated language-user, operating a system for self-expression and communication that no other creature, or computer, comes close to matching. In addition to the speed of acquisition, the fact that it generally occurs, without overt instruction, for all children, regardless of great differences in their circumstances, provides strong support for the idea that there is an innate predisposition in the human infant to acquire language. We can think of this as a special capacity for language with which each newborn child is endowed. By itself, however, this inborn language capacity is not enough.

Acquisition

The process of language acquisition has some basic requirements. During the first two or three years of development, a child requires interaction with other language-users in order to bring the general language capacity into contact with a particular language such as English. We have already seen, in the case of Genie (Chapter 12), that a child who does not hear or is not allowed to use language will learn no language. We have also identified the importance of cultural transmission (Chapter 2), meaning that the particular language a child learns is not genetically inherited, but is acquired in a particular language-using environment.

The child must also be physically capable of sending and receiving sound signals in a language. All infants make "cooing" and "babbling" noises during their first year, but congenitally deaf infants stop after about six months. So, in order to speak a language, a child must be able to hear that language being used. By itself, however, hearing language sounds is not enough. One case, reported by Moskowitz (1991), demonstrated that, with deaf parents who gave their normal-hearing son ample exposure to television and radio programs, the boy did not acquire an ability to speak or understand English. What he did learn very effectively, by the age of three, was the use of American Sign Language, that is, the language he used to interact with his parents. A crucial requirement appears to be the opportunity to interact with others via language.

Input

Under normal circumstances, human infants are certainly helped in their language acquisition by the typical behavior of older children and adults in the home environment who provide language samples, or **input**, for the child. Adults such as mom, dad and the grandparents tend not to address the little creature before them as if they are involved in normal adult-to-adult conversation. There is not much of this: *Well, John Junior, shall we invest in blue chip industrials, or would grain futures offer better short-term prospects?* However, there does seem to be a lot of this: *Oh, goody, now Daddy push choo choo?*

The characteristically simplified speech style adopted by someone who spends a lot of time interacting with a young child incorporates a lot of forms associated with "baby talk." These are either simplified words (*tummy*, *nana*) or alternative forms, with repeated simple sounds and syllables, for things in the child's environment (*choo-choo*, *poo-poo*, *pee-pee*, *wa-wa*). This type of speech style is also characterized by the frequent use of questions, often using exaggerated intonation, extra loudness and a slower tempo with longer pauses. Sometimes described as "motherese" or "child-directed speech," this style is more generally known as "caregiver speech."

Caregiver speech

Built into a lot of caregiver speech is a type of conversational structure that seems to assign an interactive role to the young child even before he or she becomes a speaking participant. If we look at an extract from the speech of a mother to her child (aged 1 year 11 months) as if it were a two-party conversation, then this type of structuring becomes apparent. Notice how the mother reacts to the child's actions and vocalizations as if they were turns in the conversation. (This example is from Brunner, 1983.)

MOTHER: *Look!*
CHILD: (touches pictures)
MOTHER: *What are those?*
CHILD: (vocalizes a babble string and smiles)
MOTHER: *Yes, there are rabbits*.
CHILD: (vocalizes, smiles looks up at mother)
MOTHER: (laughs) *Yes, rabbit*.
CHILD: (vocalizes, smiles)
MOTHER: *Yes*. (laughs)

Caregiver speech is also characterized by simple sentence structures and a lot of repetition and paraphrasing, with reference largely restricted to the here and now. If the child is indeed in the process of working out a system of putting sounds and words together, then these simplified models produced by the interacting adult may serve as good clues to the basic structural organization involved.

The acquisition schedule

All normal children develop language at roughly the same time, along much the same schedule. Since we could say the same thing for sitting up, crawling, standing, walking, using the hands and many other physical activities, it would seem that the language acquisition schedule has the same basis as the biologically determined development of motor skills and the maturation of the infant's brain.

We could think of the child as having the biological capacity to identify aspects of linguistic input at different stages during the early years of life. Long before children begin to talk, they have been actively processing what they hear. We can identify what very young children are paying attention to by the way they increase or decrease "sucking behavior" in response to speech sounds or turn their heads in the direction of those sounds. At one month an infant is capable of distinguishing between [ba] and [pa]. During the first three months, the child develops a range of crying styles, with different patterns for different needs, produces big smiles in response to a speaking face, and starts to create distinct vocalizations.

Cooing

The earliest use of speech-like sounds has been described as **cooing**. During the first few months of life, the child gradually becomes capable of producing sequences of vowel-like sounds, particularly high vowels similar to [i] and [u]. By four months of age, the developing ability to bring the back of the tongue into regular contact with the back of the palate allows the infant to create sounds similar to the velar consonants [k] and [g], hence the common description as "cooing" or "gooing" for this type of production. Speech perception studies have shown that by the time they are five months old, babies can already hear the difference between the vowels [i] and [a] and discriminate between syllables like [ba] and [ga].

Babbling

Between six and eight months, the child is sitting up and producing a number of different vowels and consonants, as well as combinations such as *ba-ba-ba* and *ga-ga-ga*. This type of sound production is described as **babbling**. In the later babbling stage, around nine to ten months, there are recognizable intonation patterns to the consonant and vowel combinations being produced, as well as variation in the combinations such as *ba-ba-da-da*. Nasal sounds also become more common and certain syllable sequences such as *ma-ma-ma* and *da-da-da* are inevitably interpreted by parents as versions of "mama" and "dada" and repeated back to the child.

As children begin to pull themselves into a standing position during the tenth and eleventh months, they become capable of using their vocalizations to express emotions and emphasis. This late babbling stage is characterized by more complex syllable combinations (*ma-da-ga-ba*), a lot of sound-play and attempted imitations. This "pre-language" use of sound provides the child with some experience of the social role of speech because adults tend to react to the babbling, however incoherent, as if it is actually the child's contribution to social interaction.

One note of caution should be sounded at this point. Child language researchers certainly report very carefully on the age of any child whose language they study. However, they are also very careful to point out that there is substantial variation among children in terms of the age at which particular features of linguistic development occur. It is worth remembering that even a great thinker like Albert Einstein was reported to have been very slow in developing spoken language skills. So, we should always treat statements concerning development stages such as "by six months" or "by the age of two" as general approximations and subject to variation in individual children.

The one-word stage

Between twelve and eighteen months, children begin to produce a variety of recognizable single unit utterances. This period, traditionally called the **one-word stage**, is characterized by speech in which single terms are uttered for everyday objects such as "milk," "cookie," "cat," "cup" and "spoon" (usually pronounced [pun]). Other forms such as [ʌsæ] may occur in circumstances that suggest the child is producing a version of *What's that*, so the label "one-word" for this stage may be misleading and a term such as "single-unit" would be more accurate. We sometimes use the term **holophrastic** speech (meaning a single form functioning as a phrase or sentence) to describe an utterance that could be analyzed as a word, a phrase, or a sentence.

While many of these holophrastic utterances seem to be used to name objects, they may also be produced in circumstances that suggest the child is already extending their use. An empty bed may elicit the name of a sister who normally sleeps in the bed, even in the absence of the person named. During this stage, then, the child may be able to refer to *Karen* and *bed*, but isn't ready yet to put the forms together in a more complex phrase. Well, it is a lot to expect from someone who can only walk with a stagger and has to come down stairs backwards.

The two-word stage

Depending on what we count as an occurrence of two distinct words used together, the **two-word stage** can begin around eighteen to twenty months, as the child's vocabulary moves beyond fifty words. By the time the child is two years old, a variety of combinations, similar to *baby chair*, *mommy eat*, *cat bad*, will usually have appeared. The adult interpretation of such combinations is, of course, very much tied to the context of their utterance. The phrase *baby chair* may be taken as an expression of possession (= this is baby's chair), or as a request (= put baby in chair), or as a statement (= baby is in the chair), depending on different circumstances. Here are some other examples reported from the two-word stage:

big boat	*mama dress*
doggie bark	*more milk*
hit ball	*shoe off*

Whatever it is that the child actually intends to communicate through such expressions, the significant functional consequences are that the adults or, more often, older children in the household behave as if communication is taking place. That is, the child not only produces speech, but also receives feedback confirming that the utterance worked as a contribution to the interaction. Moreover, by the age of two, whether the child is producing 200 or 300 distinct "words," he or she will be capable

of understanding five times as many, and will typically be treated as an entertaining conversational partner by the principal caregiver.

Telegraphic speech

Between two and two-and-a-half years old, the child begins producing a large number of utterances that could be classified as "multiple-word" speech. The salient feature of these utterances ceases to be the number of words, but the variation in word forms that begins to appear. Before we investigate this development, we should note a stage that is described as **telegraphic speech**. This is characterized by strings of words (lexical morphemes) in phrases or sentences such as *this shoe all wet*, *cat drink milk* and *daddy go bye-bye*. The child has clearly developed some sentence-building capacity by this stage and can get the word order correct. While this type of telegram-format speech is being produced, a number of grammatical inflections begin to appear in some of the word forms and simple prepositions (*in*, *on*) are also used.

By the age of two-and-a-half, the child's vocabulary is expanding rapidly and the child is initiating more talk while increased physical activity includes running and jumping. By three, the vocabulary has grown to hundreds of words and pronunciation has become clearer. At this point, it is worth considering what kind of influence the adults have in the development of the child's speech.

The acquisition process

As the linguistic repertoire of the child increases, it is often assumed that the child is, in some sense, being "taught" the language. This idea is not really supported by what the child actually does. For the vast majority of children, no one provides any instruction on how to speak the language. A more accurate view would have the children actively constructing, from what is said to them and around them, possible ways of using the language. The child's linguistic production appears to be mostly a matter of trying out constructions and testing whether they work or not.

It is simply not possible that the child is acquiring the language principally through adult instruction. Certainly, children can be heard to repeat versions of what adults say on occasion and they are clearly in the process of adopting a lot of vocabulary from the speech they hear. However, adults simply do not produce many of the expressions that turn up in children's speech. Notice how, in the following extract (from Clark, 1993), the child creates a totally new verb (*to Woodstock*) in the context.

NOAH (picking up a toy dog):	*This is Woodstock*.
	(He bobs the toy in Adam's face)
ADAM:	*Hey Woodstock, don't do that*.
	(Noah persists)
ADAM:	*I'm going home so you won't Woodstock me*.

Learning through imitation?

Similar evidence against "imitation" as the basis of the child's speech production has been found in studies of the structures used by young children. They may repeat single words or phrases, but not the sentence structures. In the following two examples, the children were asked to repeat what the adult said (on the left).

The dogs are hungry ~ *dog hungry*
The owl who eats candy runs fast ~ *owl eat a candy and he run fast*.

It is likely that the children understand what the adults are saying in these examples. They just have their own way of expressing what they understand.

Learning through correction?

It is also unlikely that adult "corrections" are a very effective determiner of how the child speaks. A lot of very amusing conversational snippets, involving an adult's attempt to correct a child's speech, seem to demonstrate the hopelessness of the task. One example (*other one spoon*) was quoted at the beginning of the chapter. Even when the correction is attempted in a more subtle manner, the child will continue to use a personally constructed form, despite the adult's repetition of what the correct form should be. Note that in the following dialog (quoted in Cazden, 1972) the child, a four-year-old, is neither imitating the adult's speech nor accepting the adult's correction.

CHILD: *My teacher **holded** the baby rabbits and we patted them*.
MOTHER: *Did you say your teacher **held** the baby rabbits?*
CHILD: *Yes*
MOTHER: *What did you say she did?*
CHILD: *She **holded** the baby rabbits and we patted them*.
MOTHER: *Did you say she **held** them tightly?*
CHILD: *No, she **holded** them loosely.*

One factor that seems to be important in the child's acquisition process is the actual use of sound and word combinations, either in interaction with others or in word play, alone. One two-year-old, described in Weir (1966), was tape-recorded as he lay in bed alone and could be heard playing with words and phrases, *I go dis way . . . way bay . . . baby do dis bib . . . all bib . . . bib . . . dere*. Word play of this type seems to be an important element in the development of the child's linguistic repertoire. When we look more closely at the child's development beyond the telegraphic stage, we can trace specific linguistic features that begin to turn up on a regular basis in the steady stream of speech emerging from the little chatterbox.

Developing morphology

By the time a child is two-and-a-half years old, he or she is going beyond telegraphic speech forms and incorporating some of the inflectional morphemes that indicate the grammatical function of the nouns and verbs used. The first to appear is usually the *-ing* form in expressions such as *cat sitting* and *mommy reading book*.

The next morphological development is typically the marking of regular plurals with the *-s* form, as in *boys* and *cats*. The acquisition of the plural marker is often accompanied by a process of **overgeneralization**. The child overgeneralizes the apparent rule of adding *-s* to form plurals and will talk about *foots* and *mans*. When the alternative pronunciation of the plural morpheme used in *houses* (i.e. ending in [-əz]) comes into use, it too is given an overgeneralized application and forms such as *boyses* or *footses* can be heard. At the same time as this overgeneralization is taking place, some children also begin using irregular plurals such as *men* quite appropriately for a while, but then try out the general rule on the forms, producing expressions like *some mens* and *two feets*, or even *two feetses*. Not long after, the use of the possessive inflection *-'s* occurs in expressions such as *girl's dog* and *Mummy's book*.

At about the same time, different forms of the verb "to be," such as *are* and *was*, begin to be used. The appearance of forms such as *was* and, at about the same time, *went* and *came* should be noted. These are irregular past-tense forms that we would not expect to hear before the more regular forms. However, they do typically precede the appearance of the *-ed* inflection. Once the regular past-tense forms (*walked*, *played*) begin appearing in the child's speech, the irregular forms may disappear for a while, replaced by overgeneralized versions such as *goed* and *comed*. For a period, the *-ed* inflection may be added to everything, producing such oddities as *walkeded* and *wented*. As with the plural forms, the child works out (usually after the age of four) which forms are regular and which are not. Finally, the regular *-s* marker on third person singular present tense verbs appears. It occurs first with full verbs (*comes*, *looks*) and then with auxiliaries (*does*, *has*).

Throughout this sequence there is a great deal of variability. Individual children may produce "good" forms one day and "odd" forms the next. The evidence suggests that the child is working out how to use the linguistic system while focused on communication and interaction rather than correctness. For the child, the use of forms such as *goed* and *foots* is simply a means of trying to say what he or she means during a particular stage of development. Those embarrassed parents who insist that the child didn't hear such things at home are implicitly recognizing that "imitation" is not the primary force in first language acquisition.

Developing syntax

There have been numerous studies of the development of syntax in children's speech. We will look at the development of two structures that seem to be acquired in a regular way by most English-speaking children. In the formation of questions and the use of negatives, there appear to be three identifiable stages. The ages at which children go through these stages can vary quite a bit, but the general pattern seems to be that Stage 1 occurs between 18 and 26 months, Stage 2 between 22 and 30 months, and Stage 3 between 24 and 40 months. (The overlap in the periods is a reflection of the different rates at which different children normally develop.)

Forming questions

In forming questions, the child's first stage has two procedures. Simply add a Wh-form (*Where, Who*) to the beginning of the expression or utter the expression with a rise in intonation towards the end, as in these examples:

Where kitty? *Doggie?*
Where horse go? *Sit chair?*

In the second stage, more complex expressions can be formed, but the rising intonation strategy continues to be used. It is noticeable that more Wh-forms, such as *What* and *Why* come into use, as in these examples:

What book name? *You want eat?*
Why you smiling? *See my doggie?*

In the third stage, the required movement of the auxiliary in English questions (*I can have ... ⇒ Can I have ...?*) becomes evident in the child's speech, but doesn't automatically spread to all Wh-question types. In fact, some children beginning school in their fifth or sixth year may still prefer to form Wh-questions (especially with negatives) without the type of structure found in adult speech (e.g. *Why kitty can't do it?* instead of *Why can't kitty do it?*). Apart from these problems with Wh-questions and continuing trouble with the morphology of verbs (e.g. *Did I caught it?* instead of *Did I catch it?*), Stage 3 questions are generally quite close to the adult model, as in these examples:

Can I have a piece? *Did I caught it?*
Will you help me? *How that opened?*
What did you do? *Why kitty can't stand up?*

Forming negatives

In the case of negatives, Stage 1 seems to involve a simple strategy of putting *No* or *Not* at the beginning. In some cases (e.g. *No you doing it*), the negative may be used for a denial (= *You aren't doing it*), while in other circumstances, it may be used to express a desire (= *I don't want you to do it*), but the utterance doesn't change. At this stage, both *no* and *not* can be attached to nouns and verbs, as in these examples:

no mitten *not a teddy bear*
no fall *no sit there*

In the second stage, the additional negative forms *don't* and *can't* appear, and, with *no* and *not*, are increasingly used in front of the verb rather than at the beginning of the utterance. At this stage, children seem to be using the form *don't* as a single unit, with no connection to the alternative *do not*, probably because the contracted form of *not* (*n't*) is simply not heard as a distinct element in speech. Here are some examples:

He no bite you *I don't want it*
That not touch *You can't dance*

The third stage sees the incorporation of other auxiliary forms such as *didn't* and *won't* while the typical Stage 1 forms disappear. A very late acquisition is the negative form *isn't*, with the result that some Stage 2 forms (with *not* instead of *isn't*) continue to be used for quite a long time, as in the examples:

I didn't caught it *He not taking it*
She won't let go *This not ice cream*

The study of the developing use of negative forms has produced some delightful examples of children operating their own rules for negative sentences. One famous example (from McNeill, 1966) also shows the futility of overt adult "correction" of children's speech.

CHILD: *Nobody don't like me.*
MOTHER: *No, say "nobody likes me."*
CHILD: *Nobody don't like me.*
(Eight repetitions of this dialog)
MOTHER: *No, now listen carefully; say "nobody likes me."*
CHILD: *Oh! Nobody don't likes me.*

Developing semantics

The anecdotes that parents retell about their child's early speech (to the intense embarrassment of the grown-up child) usually involve examples of the strange use of words. Having been warned that flies bring germs into the house, one child was

asked what "germs" were and the answer was "something the flies play with." It is not always possible to determine so precisely the meanings that children attach to the words they use.

It seems that during the holophrastic stage many children use their limited vocabulary to refer to a large number of unrelated objects. One child first used *bow-wow* to refer to a dog and then to a fur piece with glass eyes, a set of cufflinks and even a bath thermometer. The word *bow-wow* seemed to have a meaning like "object with shiny bits." Other children often extend *bow-wow* to refer to cats, cows and horses.

This process is called **overextension** and the most common pattern is for the child to overextend the meaning of a word on the basis of similarities of shape, sound and size, and, to a lesser extent, movement and texture. Thus the word *ball* is extended to all kinds of round objects, including a lampshade, a doorknob and the moon. Or, a *tick-tock* is initially used for a watch, but can also be used for a bathroom scale with a round dial. On the basis of size, presumably, the word *fly* was first used for the insect and then came to be used for specks of dirt and even crumbs of bread. Apparently due to similarities of texture, the expression *sizo* was first used by one child for scissors, and then extended to all metal objects. The semantic development in a child's use of words is usually a process of overextension initially, followed by a gradual process of narrowing down the application of each term as more words are learned.

Although overextension has been well documented in children's speech production, it isn't necessarily used in speech comprehension. One two-year-old used *apple*, in speaking, to refer to a number of other round objects like a tomato and a ball, but had no difficulty picking out *the apple*, when asked, from a set of round objects including a ball and a tomato.

One interesting feature of the young child's semantics is the way certain lexical relations are treated. In terms of hyponymy, the child will almost always use the "middle" level term in a hyponymous set such as *animal – dog – terrier*. It would seem more logical to learn the most general term (*animal*), but all evidence indicates that children first use *dog* with an overextended meaning close to the meaning of "animal." This may be connected to a similar tendency in adults, when talking to young children, to refer to *flowers* (not the more general *plants*, or the more specific *tulips*).

Later developments

Some types of antonymous relations are acquired fairly late (after the age of five). In one study, a large number of kindergarten children pointed to the same heavily laden apple tree when asked *Which tree has more apples?* and also when asked *Which tree has less apples?*. They just seem to think the correct response will be the larger one, disregarding the difference between *more* and *less*. The distinctions between a

number of other pairs such as *before/after* and *buy/sell* also seem to be later acquisitions. The ability to produce certain types of complex structures and extended discourse are also much later developments.

Despite the fact that children are still in the process of acquiring a number of other aspects of their first language through the later years of childhood, it is normally assumed that, by the age of five, they have completed the greater part of the basic language acquisition process. They have become accomplished users of a first language. According to some, the child is then in a good position to start learning a second (or foreign) language. However, most people don't start trying to learn another language until much later. The question that always arises is: if first language acquisition was so straightforward and largely automatic, why is learning a second language so difficult? We will try to answer that question in Chapter 14.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1 Why are some of the infant's first sounds described as "cooing"?

2 Can you describe four typical features of caregiver speech?

3 During which stage do children typically first produce syllable sequences similar to *mama* and *dada* and how old are they?

4 At about what age do children typically begin producing varied syllable combinations such as *ma-da-ga-ba*?

5 Which of these two utterances was produced by the older child and why?
(a) *I not hurt him*
(b) *No the sun shining*

6 What is the term used to describe the process involved when a child uses one word like *ball* to refer to an apple, an egg, a grape and a ball?

TASKS

A The "sucking behavior" of infants was mentioned in this chapter in connection with early speech perception. How can it be measured and what can we learn from these measurements?

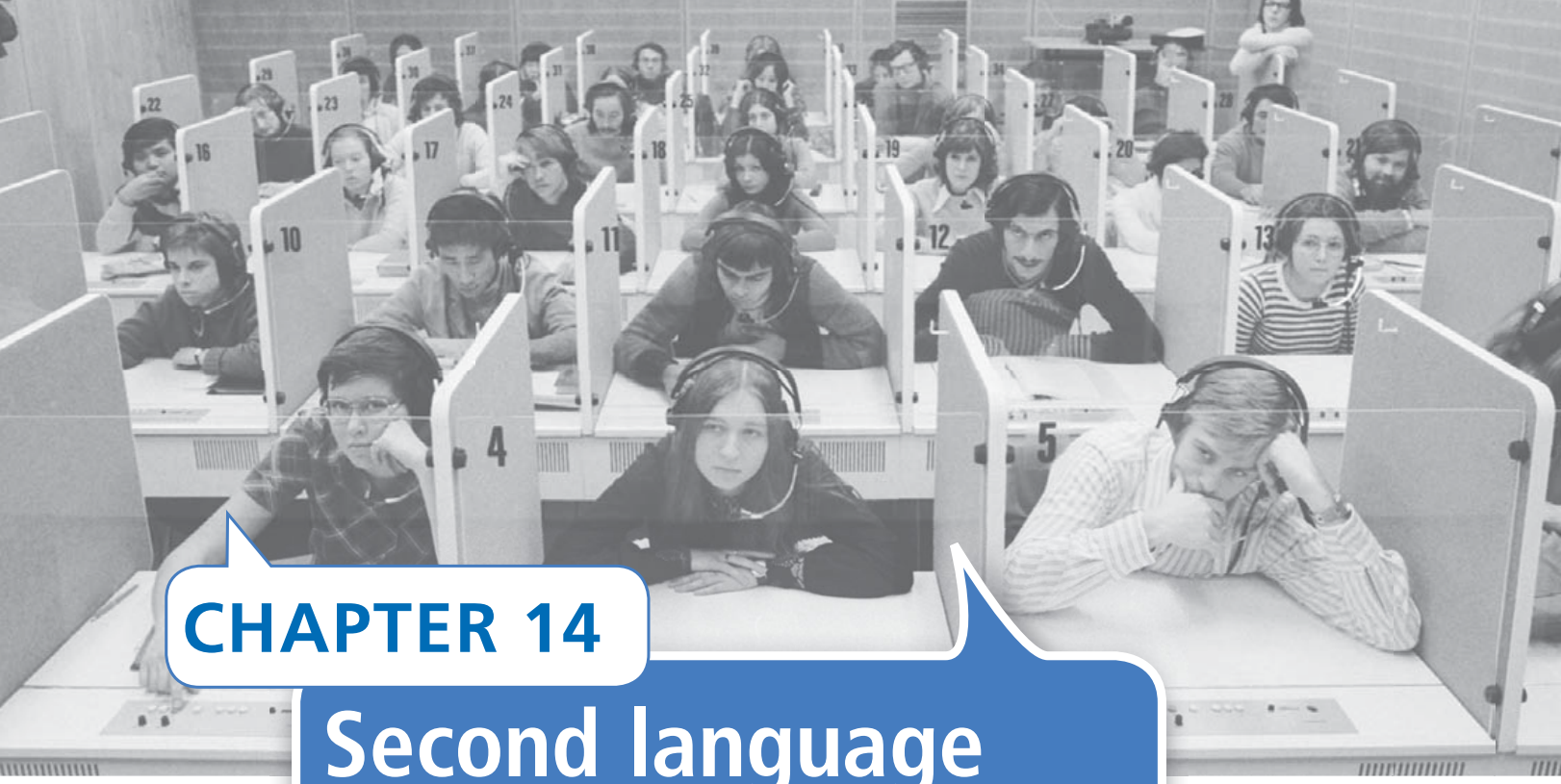
B The connection between the early development of motor skills and the development of speech for an average child in an English-speaking environment was described in detail by Lenneberg (1967: 128–130) and recently elaborated by Iverson (2010). Can you complete the following chart by adding appropriate descriptions of motor skills and speech skills at each age, showing how they develop together? (Note that there are often two descriptive phrases for some levels.)

Motor skills

can walk with support
can sit, bend forward, and reach for objects
can move easily on hands and feet
can lift head and hands from a lying position
can sit up with support
can grasp with thumb and fingers
puts objects such as toys or fingers in mouth while making sounds
can pull self into standing position

Speech skills

produces more consonant-like sounds as well as vowels
produces squealing, gurgling and cooing sounds



CHAPTER 14

Second language acquisition/learning

"Easter is a party for to eat of the lamb," the Italian nanny explained. "One too may eat of the chocolate."

"And who brings the chocolate?" the teacher asked.

I knew the word, so I raised my hand, saying, "The rabbit of Easter. He bring of the chocolate."

"A rabbit?" The teacher, assuming I'd used the wrong word, positioned her index fingers on top of her head, wriggling them as though they were ears. "You mean one of these? A *rabbit* rabbit?"

"Well, sure," I said. "He come in the night when one sleep on a bed. With a hand he have a basket and foods."

The teacher sighed and shook her head. As far as she was concerned, I had just explained everything that was wrong with my country. "No, no," she said. "Here in France the chocolate is brought by a big bell that flies in from Rome."

I called for a time-out. "But how do the bell know where you live?"

"Well," she said, "how does a rabbit?"

Sedaris (2000)

Some children grow up in a social environment where more than one language is used and are able to acquire a second language in circumstances similar to those of first language acquisition. Those fortunate individuals are bilingual (see Chapter 18). However, most of us are not exposed to a second language until much later and, like David Sedaris, our ability to use a second language, even after years of study, rarely matches ability in our first language.

Second language learning

There is something of an enigma in this situation, since there is apparently no other system of "knowledge" that we can learn better at two or three years of age than at thirteen or thirty. A number of reasons have been suggested to account for this enigma, and a number of different approaches have been proposed to help learners become as effective communicating in a foreign or second language (L2) as they are in their first language (L1).

A distinction is sometimes made between learning in a "foreign language" setting (learning a language that is not generally spoken in the surrounding community) and a "second language" setting (learning a language that is spoken in the surrounding community). That is, Japanese students in an English class in Japan are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and, if those same students were in an English class in the USA, they would be learning English as a second language (ESL). In either case, they are simply trying to learn another language, so the expression **second language learning** is used more generally to describe both situations.

Acquisition and learning

A more significant distinction is made between acquisition and learning. The term **acquisition** is used to refer to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations with others who know the language. Acquisition normally takes place without a teacher. The term **learning**, however, applies to a more conscious process of accumulating knowledge of the features of a language, such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, typically in an institutional setting, with teachers. (Mathematics, for example, is learned, not acquired.)

Activities associated with learning have traditionally been used in second language teaching in schools and have a tendency, when successful, to result in more knowledge "about" the language (as demonstrated in tests) than fluency in actually using the language (as demonstrated in social interaction). Activities associated with acquisition are those experienced by the young child and, by analogy, those who "pick up" a second language from long periods spent in interaction, constantly using the language, with native speakers of the language. Native speakers are those who speak the language as their L1. Those individuals whose L2 exposure is primarily a learning type of experience tend not to develop the same kind of general proficiency as those who have had more of an acquisition type of experience.

Acquisition barriers

For most people, the experience with an L2 is fundamentally different from their L1 experience and it is hardly conducive to acquisition. They usually encounter the L2 during their teenage or adult years, in a few hours each week of school time

(rather than via the constant interaction experienced as a child), with a lot of other things going on (young children have little else to do). They also have developed an unconscious commitment to the sounds and structures of an already known language that has been in use for most of their daily communicative requirements for many years. Despite the fact that insufficient time, focus and incentive undermine many L2 learning attempts, there are some individuals who seem to be able to overcome the difficulties and develop an ability to use the L2 quite effectively, though not usually sounding like a native speaker.

However, even in ideal acquisition situations, very few adults seem to reach native-like proficiency in using an L2. There are individuals who can achieve great expertise in the written language, but not the spoken language. One example is Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), who wrote novels in English that became classics of English literature, but whose English speech retained the strong Polish accent of his L1. This might suggest that some features of an L2, such as vocabulary and grammar, are easier to learn than others, such as pronunciation. Indeed, without early experience using the sounds and intonation of the L2, even highly fluent and proficient adult learners are likely to be perceived as having an "accent" of some kind.

The age factor

This type of observation is sometimes taken as evidence that, after the critical period for language acquisition has passed, around the time of puberty, it becomes very difficult to acquire another language fully (see Chapter 12). We might think of this process in terms of our inherent capacity for language being strongly taken over by features of the L1, with a resulting loss of flexibility or openness to receive the features of another language. Given the example of Joseph Conrad and many others, we might note that the dominance of the L1 is particularly strong in terms of pronunciation.

Against this view, it has been demonstrated that students in their early teens are quicker and more effective L2 learners in the classroom than, for example, seven-year-olds. It may be, of course, that the effective learning of an L2 (even with a trace of an accent) requires a combination of factors. The optimum age for learning may be during the years from about ten to sixteen when the flexibility of our inherent capacity for language has not been completely lost, and the maturation of cognitive skills allows a more effective analysis of the regular features of the L2 being learned.

Affective factors

Yet even during this proposed optimum age for L2 learning, there may exist an acquisition barrier of quite a different kind. Teenagers are typically much more self-conscious than younger children. If there is a strong element of unwillingness or embarrassment in attempting to produce the different sounds of another language,

then it may override whatever physical and cognitive abilities there are. If this self-consciousness is accompanied by a lack of empathy with the other culture (for example, feeling no identification with its speakers or their customs), then the subtle effects of not really wanting to sound like a Russian or a German or an American may strongly inhibit the learning process.

This type of emotional reaction, or "affect," may also be caused by dull textbooks, unpleasant classroom surroundings or an exhausting schedule of study and/or work. All these negative feelings or experiences are **affective factors** that can create a barrier to acquisition. Basically, if we are stressed, uncomfortable, self-conscious or unmotivated, we are unlikely to learn very much. In contrast, learners who have other personality traits, such as self-confidence, low anxiety and a positive self-image, seem better able to overcome difficulties encountered in the learning space.

Children are generally less constrained by affective factors. Descriptions of L2 acquisition in childhood are full of instances where young children quickly overcome their inhibitions as they try to use new words and phrases. Adults can sometimes overcome their inhibitions too. In one intriguing study, a group of adult L2 learners volunteered to have their self-consciousness levels reduced by having their alcohol levels gradually increased. Up to a certain point, the pronunciation of the L2 noticeably improved, but after a certain number of drinks, as we might expect, pronunciations deteriorated rapidly. Courses introducing "French with cognac" or "Russian with vodka" may provide a partial solution, but the inhibitions are likely to return with sobriety.

Focus on teaching method

Despite all these barriers, the need for instruction in other languages has led to a variety of educational approaches and methods aimed at fostering L2 learning. As long ago as 1483, William Caxton used his newly established printing press to produce a book of *Right good lernyng for to lerne shortly frenssh and englyssh*. He was not the first to compile exercise material for L2 learners and his phrase-book format with customary greetings (*Syre, god you kepe. I haue not seen you in longe tyme*) has many modern counterparts. More recent approaches designed to promote L2 learning have tended to reflect different theoretical views on how an L2 might best be learned.

The grammar–translation method

The most traditional approach is to treat L2 learning in the same way as any other academic subject. Vocabulary lists and sets of grammar rules are used to define the target of learning, memorization is encouraged, and written language rather than spoken language is emphasized. This method has its roots in the traditional teaching

of Latin and is described as the **grammar–translation method**. This label has actually been applied to the approach by its detractors, who have pointed out that its emphasis on learning about the L2 often leaves students quite ignorant of how the language might be used in everyday conversation. Although this method clearly produced many successful L2 users over the centuries, it has been noted that students can leave school, having achieved high grades in French class via this method, yet find themselves at a loss when confronted by the way the French in France actually use their language.

The audiolingual method

A very different approach, emphasizing the spoken language, became popular in the middle of the twentieth century. It involved a systematic presentation of the structures of the L2, moving from the simple to the more complex, in the form of drills that the student had to repeat. This approach, called the **audiolingual method**, was strongly influenced by a belief that the fluent use of a language was essentially a set of "habits" that could be developed with a lot of practice. Much of this practice involved hours spent in a language laboratory repeating oral drills. Versions of this approach are still used in language teaching, but its critics have pointed out that isolated practice in drilling language patterns bears no resemblance to the interactional nature of actual spoken language use. Moreover, it can be incredibly boring.

Communicative approaches

More recent revisions of the L2 learning experience can best be described as **communicative approaches**. They are partially a reaction against the artificiality of "pattern-practice" and also against the belief that consciously learning the grammar rules of a language will result in an ability to use the language. Although there are different versions of how to create communicative experiences for L2 learners, they are all based on a belief that the functions of language (what it is used for) should be emphasized rather than the forms of the language (correct grammatical or phonological structures). Classroom lessons are likely to be organized around concepts such as "asking for things" in different social settings, rather than "the forms of the past tense" in different sentences. These changes have coincided with attempts to provide more appropriate materials for L2 learning that has a specific purpose, as in "English for medicine" or "Japanese for business."

Focus on the learner

The most fundamental change in the area of L2 learning in recent years has been a shift from concern with the teacher, the textbook and the method to an interest in the

learner and the acquisition process. For example, one radical feature of most communicative approaches is the toleration of "errors" produced by students. Traditionally, "errors" were regarded negatively and they had to be avoided or eradicated. The more recent acceptance of such errors in learners' use of the L2 is based on a fundamental shift in perspective from the more traditional view of how L2 learning takes place.

Rather than consider a Spanish (L1) speaker's production of *in the room there are three womens* as simply a failure to learn correct English (which can be remedied through extra practice of the correct form), we can look at this utterance as an indication of the natural L2 acquisition process in action. An "error," then, is not something that hinders a student's progress, but is probably a clue to the active learning progress being made by the student as he or she tries out ways of communicating in the new language. Just as children acquiring their L1 produce certain types of ungrammatical forms at times, so we might expect the L2 learner to produce similar forms at certain stages (see Chapter 13). The example of *womens* might be seen as a type of overgeneralization (of *-s* as the plural marker), used by the learner based on the most common way of making plural forms in English.

Transfer

Of course, some errors may be due to "transfer" (also called "crosslinguistic influence"). **Transfer** means using sounds, expressions or structures from the L1 when performing in the L2. For example, a Spanish (L1) speaker who produces *take it from the side inferior* may be trying to use the Spanish adjective *inferior* (= *lower* in English) and placing it after the noun, as is typical in Spanish constructions. If the L1 and L2 have similar features (e.g. marking plural on the ends of nouns), then the learner may be able to benefit from the **positive transfer** of L1 knowledge to the L2. On the other hand, transferring an L1 feature that is really different from the L2 (e.g. putting the adjective after the noun) results in **negative transfer** and it may make the L2 expression difficult to understand. The impact of negative transfer on communicative success tends to be greater when the L1 and L2 are really different types of languages, making the task of becoming proficient in English more demanding for Chinese than for German speakers. We should remember that negative transfer (sometimes called "interference") is more common in the early stages of L2 learning and often decreases as the learner develops greater familiarity with the L2.

Interlanguage

On close inspection, the language produced by L2 learners contains a large number of "errors" that seem to have no connection to the forms of either the L1 or L2. For

example, the Spanish L1 speaker who says in English *She name is Maria* is producing a form that is not used by adult speakers of English, does not occur in English L1 acquisition by children, and is not based on a structure in Spanish. Evidence of this sort suggests that there is some in-between system used in the L2 acquisition process that certainly contains aspects of the L1 and L2, but which is an inherently variable system with rules of its own. This system is called an **interlanguage** and it is now considered to be the basis of all L2 production.

If some learners develop a fairly fixed repertoire of L2 expressions, containing many forms that do not match the target language, and seem not to be progressing any further, their interlanguage is said to have "fossilized." The process of **fossilization** in L2 pronunciation seems to be the most likely basis of what is perceived as a foreign accent. However, an interlanguage is not designed to fossilize. It will naturally develop and become a more effective means of L2 communication given appropriate conditions. Discovering just what count as the appropriate conditions for successful L2 learning is an ongoing area of investigation.

Motivation

There are several factors that combine in a profile of a successful L2 learner. Obviously, the motivation to learn is important. Many learners have an **instrumental motivation**. That is, they want to learn the L2 in order to achieve some other goal, such as completing a school graduation requirement or being able to read scientific publications, but they are not really planning on engaging in much social interaction using the L2. In contrast, those learners with an **integrative motivation** want to learn the L2 for social purposes, in order to take part in the social life of a community using that language and to become an accepted member of that community.

It is also worth noting that those who experience some success in L2 communication are among the most motivated to learn. So, motivation may be as much a result of success as a cause. A language-learning situation that provides support and encourages students to try to use whatever L2 skills they have in order to communicate successfully must consequently be more helpful than one that dwells on errors, corrections and a failure to be perfectly accurate. Indeed, the learner who is willing to guess, risks making mistakes, and tries to communicate in the L2 will tend, given the opportunity, to be more successful. An important part of that opportunity is the availability of "input."

Input and output

The term **input** is used, as in L1 acquisition (see Chapter 13), to describe the language that the learner is exposed to. To be beneficial for L2 learning, that input has to be

comprehensible, because we can't process what we don't understand. Input can be made comprehensible by being simpler in structure and vocabulary, as in the variety of speech called **foreigner talk**. Native speakers of English may try to ask an international student *How are you getting on in your studies?*, but, if not understood, may switch to *English class, you like it?* This type of foreigner talk may be beneficial, not only for immediate communication, but also for providing the learner with comprehensible examples of the basic structure of the L2 as input.

As the learner's interlanguage develops, however, there is a need for more interaction and the kind of "negotiated input" that arises in conversation. **Negotiated input** is L2 material that the learner can acquire in interaction through requests for clarification while active attention is being focused on what is said. In the following interaction (from Pica *et al.*, 1991), notice how the learner, a non-native speaker (NNS) of English, and the English native speaker (NS) negotiate meaning together. The comprehensible input (i.e. using the word *triangle* to describe a shape) is provided at a point where the learner needs it and is paying attention to the meaning in context.

NS: *like part of a triangle?*
NNS: *what is triangle?*
NS: *a triangle is a shape um it has three sides*
NNS: *a peak?*
NS: *three straight sides*
NNS: *a peak?*
NS: *yes it does look like a mountain peak, yes*
NNS: *only line only line?*
NS: *okay two of them, right? one on each side? a line on each side?*
NNS: *yes*
NS: *little lines on each side?*
NNS: *yes*
NS: *like a mountain?*
NNS: *yes*

In this type of interaction, the learner experiences the benefits of both receiving input (hearing the L2) and producing output (speaking the L2). The opportunity to produce comprehensible **output** in meaningful interaction seems to be another important element in the learner's development of L2 ability, yet it is one of the most difficult things to provide in large L2 classes.

Task-based learning

One solution has been to create different types of tasks and activities in which learners have to interact with each other, usually in small groups or pairs, to exchange

information or solve problems. The assumption in using tasks such as "describe a way to get from A to B so that your partner can draw the route on a map" or "plan a shopping trip with your partner by making a shopping list" is that students will improve their ability, especially their fluency, by using the L2 in an activity that focuses on getting meaning across and has a clear goal. Despite fears that learners will simply learn each other's "mistakes," the results of such **task-based learning** provide overwhelming evidence of more and better L2 use by more learners. The goal of such activities is not that the learners will know more about the L2, but that they will develop communicative competence in the L2.

Communicative competence

Communicative competence can be defined as the general ability to use language accurately, appropriately and flexibly. The first component is **grammatical competence**, which involves the accurate use of words and structures. Concentration on grammatical competence only, however, will not provide the learner with the ability to interpret or produce L2 expressions appropriately.

The ability to use appropriate language is the second component, called **sociolinguistic competence**. It enables the learner to know when to say *Can I have some water?* versus *Give me some water!* according to the social context. Much of what was discussed in terms of pragmatics (see Chapter 10) has to become familiar in the cultural context of the L2 if the learner is to develop sociolinguistic competence.

The third component is called **strategic competence**. This is the ability to organize a message effectively and to compensate, via strategies, for any difficulties. In L2 use, learners inevitably experience moments when there is a gap between communicative intent and their ability to express that intent. Some learners may just stop talking (bad idea), whereas others will try to express themselves using a **communication strategy** (good idea). For example, a Dutch L1 speaker wanted to refer to *een hoefijzer* in English, but didn't know the English word. So, she used a communication strategy. She created a way of referring to the object by using vocabulary she already knew, saying *the things that horses wear under their feet, the iron things* and the listener understood immediately what she meant (*horseshoes*). This flexibility in L2 use is a key element in communicative success. In essence, strategic competence is the ability to overcome potential communication problems in interaction.

Applied linguistics

In attempting to investigate the complex nature of second language learning, we have to appeal to ideas not only from linguistic analysis, but from other fields such as

communication studies, education, psychology and sociology. This large-scale endeavor is often described as **applied linguistics**. Unlike theoretical linguistics, which often seems to have a primary focus on phonology, syntax and semantics, often discussed in very abstract terms, applied linguistics is concerned with practical issues involving language and its role in everyday life. Because it represents an attempt to deal with a large range of real-world issues involving language (not only L2 learning), applied linguistics has created connections with fields as diverse as anthropology (see Chapter 20), neurolinguistics (Chapter 12), social psychology (Chapter 19) and sign language studies (Chapter 15).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1 Why do we say that mathematics is learned, not acquired?

2 What aspect of language learning do you think "the Joseph Conrad phenomenon" refers to?

3 What are four typical barriers to acquiring an L2 as an adult compared to L1 acquisition as a child?

4 What is the difference between positive and negative transfer?

5 What happens when an interlanguage fossilizes?

6 What are the three components of communicative competence?

TASKS

A What is the difference between "input" and "intake" in L2 learning?

B What arguments are presented in support of "the output hypothesis" in L2 studies?

C What is meant by a "stylistic continuum" in the study of interlanguage?

D What is contrastive analysis and how might it help us understand the following types of L2 errors in English produced by students whose L1 is Spanish?

(a) *He must wear the tie black.*
(b) *My study is modernes languages.*
(c) *He no understand you.*
(d) *It was the same size as a ball of golf.*
(e) *We stayed at home because was raining.*
(f) *I eat usually eggs for breakfast.*

E One feature of interlanguage grammars is the apparent existence of temporary rules that don't match the rules of either the L1 or the L2, as described in Gass and Selinker (2008). The following examples are from a speaker whose L1 was Arabic. Can you describe the rule(s) he seems to be using for the use of plural *-s* in English?

(a) *How many brother you have?*
(b) *The streets are very wide.*
(c) *I finish in a few day.*
(d) *Here is a lot of animal in the houses.*
(e) *Many people live in villages.*
(f) *There are two horses in the picture.*
(g) *Both my friend from my town.*
(h) *Seven days in a week.*

F Classroom activities in communicative language teaching create situations in which L2 learners produce different types of communication strategies. Can you

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FOURTH STAGE

“ Linguistic ”

The study of language

Linguistic is economic.

Language sharing information ; communication with the people, express feeling.

Dialect لهجة

*semantic deals with literal meaning

*Pragmatic most important than semantic.

The levels of Language

1-Phonology _____ Sound

2-Morphology _____ words

3-Syntax _____ Sentence

3-Semantic _____ Literal meaning

Democracy ديمقراطية

*Concept are fixed and stable and should be found in dictionary

*Association are not fixed and differs from culture to another.

*The best area where Associations work is names we name people after other people like(Fatima).

Semantic Role is a source of grammatical category.

*Semantic is an evidence Of meaning.

Mary **washes** **the dishes** (this is grammatical category)

S V O

- A dual Of an action

***Agent** if the subject is human being and it is the first type in the sentence.

The second part of the is called the theme, but if the subject tool it called something by which we do something.

John lives in London.

location

John moves from London to Manchester.

Source Goal

(use in semantic not grammar)

Especially in Language teaching we should be award of semantic relation.

What is a despair? The opposite of hope.

Synonyms are two or more than two words that have similar meaning sometimes.

Antonym the opposite of word

Ex: Happy × Sad

Dead × Alive (non gradable)

Two types of Antonym

-Gradable Antonyms

-Non-gradable Antonyms

-Bat not birds because it does not put eggs.

-Spider is not insect because it has eight legs, all insect have six legs.

Homophones :- words that similar in pronunciation but different in spelling.

Metonym:- (experience)

Collocations are words can come together side by side.

Chapter 9

Semantics

FAQ:- Frequently asked question.

*Note :- everything that is said in the lecture as well as the notes (the material) in the text book are include in the exam.

Comply with _____ يلتزم بـ

Language :- is a very sophisticated system , one reason is that it is not easy to learn a new language is acquired by children (since childhood)

*There are 25 different definitions for language .

*Sound signalling system is genetically in built in human beings.

*Our course is based on examples. Examples are very important

Example are required in lectures as well as in the exam. These examples could be form English and form Arabic as well(colloquial).

What is meaning?

Meaning is difficult to be defined.

*Language is not only a mean of communication but is a system or rather complex system of communication.

It is sophisticated because it based on the interrelation of the different levels of **language , phonology , morphology, syntax, semantic, pragmatics .**

*Each level is a system on its all. When they are put together (interwoven they constitute language).

Phonology :- the sound system or sound patterns of language. Neibouring sounds are studied.

Morphology :- the word formation or word structure of language. It deals with words

A phoneme:- it is the smallest linguistic unit that changes meaning it has not meaning by itself.

Morpheme :- is the smallest linguistics unit that has meaning.

Syntax :- deals with the structure of sentences only it is not grammar.

Semantic :- the study of meaning it deals with the dictionary meaning , conceptual meaning.

Book :- the meaning of meaning.

*Meaning is a very problematic subject (science).

*Meaning is not stable , a part of the philosophy of language.

*Objects ----- are concrete

*Feeling---------- are abstract.

*Denotations --------- Concepts

*Whenever we speak, we choose words for certain purposes. We do not speak in vacuum.

*We choose words for their denotations , connotations or associations but words are often chosen for their association.

*There are seven types of meaning.

***Connotation**:- some words have positive connotations.

Bullying _____ يتنمر

*Some words have negative connotation.

***Proper names** are very famous area in language connotations, also names are chosen for their associations .

*One of the difficulties in teaching is how to convey the meaning of the words to students .

*Concrete word types is somewhat easy to be conveyed but the abstract words are not that easy , conveying their meaning is difficult.

A system means something that is governed by rules.

Ex:-

A	**cat**	**bought**	**john**
det.artical	Animate animal singular.	V.	Proper noun

*There are semantic transitive features by which we distinguish words.

*Dictionaries Provide Conceptual meaning. They do not provide association meaning (connotations).

*Some words are described from a particular point of view, rose is described from a physical point in dictionaries but not from a poetical or aesthetic point of view.

* The Semantic role of words.

Ex: John hit Marry. ____recipient receives the action

S V O

N N

grammatical categories

Denotation: the literal or primary meaning of a word in contrast to the feelings or ideas that the word suggest conceptual meaning.

Ex: John saw Many.

N V N

experiencer affected

Connotation: an idea or feeling that a word invokes in addition to its literal or Primary meaning, associations.

Note : Sense verbs de not take (ing) unless they are used in non-finite clauses.

Ex: John left from Basrah to Baghdad

Source(Place) goal (Place)

Note : adverbials are nouns refer to places, time and for that we do not call them adverbs but adverbial

* Pragmatics Grammar, Syntax. ___ are all tools to analyze Language.

*** Coordinating Conjunction** are used to link two clauses (or items) that are equal. There are four of them in English **and, or, but, and so**. Sometimes they add **either …. or** and **neither …. nor** to them

* "**And**" has more than 9 different semantic meanings.

Semantic Relations

Big x small , short x tall

***Inclusion**

-story- storey (lexical relation).

-stationary stationery (lexical relation)

Semantic Extention.

When two or more words have similar meanings they are called (Synonyms); not the same meaning. This means Partial Synonyms. . Chief _ Cape

-Words (Synonyms) have Similar meaning but different usage.

Theme: the main idea.

The word "theme" is dealt with in linguistics in two opposite ways.

- John **is** **my Friend.**

New info. old info.

Theme Predicate also

also could be (agent) also could be (theme)

*** Theme**; is mostly non-human and could be human.

*** Agent** : is mostly human and could be non-human.

Synonymy:-

* There are some technical differences between synonyms. Technical differences are not related to linguistics.

Antonymy:-

None Polar antonymy or (gradable); could be put on a scale.
sad/happy, big / small, hot/cold.

*Always languages is about people It is not (about) prescription

Prototypical Conceptions:

School Institute , Law School

MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Polysemy. notorious, famous with bad connotation.

Bank _____ ضفة نهر --- مصرف

bark

Homophones : Some Pronunciation but with different meaning.

Homonymy: word with the same Pronunciation and spelling but with different meaning.

Polysemy: is part of semantic extension.

Extension: One concept is taken to be generalized or extended.

Semantic extension: a semantic relation, a very common relation.

Metonymy:

* The relationship in metonymy depends on our experience (in life).

* We refute a false in language conception that language is only Phonology, morphology, grammar and semantics.

I ate the whole dish

* Language in reality, in life situation.

The white house declares war.

Collocations

* This relationship defends, mostly, on neighbour – hood. It sometimes depends on sequence and association (relation).

* The prediction of words when we mention certain other words is the phenomenon of collocation.

Linguistic awareness:

hummer and nail; in Arabic "hummer and envil".

-Hummer (a car) type of horse.

-Nemesis nymesis

*Our experience in life is reflected in our language.

* Some of the collocations used in Arabic had come from English through translation and language of journalism.

BBC earth : a TV channel

Chapter 10

Pragmatics

*Pragmatics deals with the invisible meaning or the intended meaning (hidden meaning).

* The context (of situation) is the substance of pragmatics.

* Most off the time things are meant without being said.

Context

Linguistics (co-text) non-Linguistics

Ex: John is a friend of mine . He is a teacher.

Linguistically related sentences.

A: It is the Phone

B: I'm upstairs. } **Linguistics unrelated**

C: It is ok.

e.g. John is a teacher (Pragmatics is not acceptable)

(who is John ?)

e.g. John is there. (where) .

* There are certain that enable the reader to understand or reveal an implied meaning The reference of time and Place are important Criteria

*** The core of pragmatics** revolves on the idea . how " people " understand Language.

*** context** is one factor that reveals the meaning of a word . There are various factors

Semantics extension is a wide field which we will encounter (deal with) throughout our study .

e.g. Here Comes Einstein ! (Someone who is very smart)

References : depend on how people understand the word (s) or Language (or how they want to understand them)

Language is Structure and Functions according the communicative approach

Anaphora and Cutaphora

* **Language must be economic**

Speech Acts

This was Put /invented by Searle in 1960s.

*There is a difference between:

Form and Meaning

Or: Structure and function.

*There are three "Famous" structures in English (in other Languages also):

Interrogative

Imperative

Declarative

- All the interrogative sentences do not have the function of questioning. It depends on the use of the sentence.

e.g.: How old are you (to smoke)? Said to a child who is smoking.

* The key factor of revealing the function of the structure used is the use of the sentence in (different) contexts.

Politeness:

* Linguistically, Politeness is a linguistic phenomenon which is used to recognize others and show respect.

- It is used to mitigate the language used .

- To be aware of our language when we talk.

It could be put on a scale:

Less Polite Direct ____scale ____ more Polite indirect

Chapter 11

Discourse Analysis

*** Discourse means Language itself.**

* Some Linguists say that discourse deals only with Oral Language. Other say it deals only with written Language. Some other Linguists claim that it deals with the both.

*Text Linguistics differs frim discourse analysis, but we shall deal with discourse as oral as well as written Language.

*For example, reading a novel (dialogues in a novel and other speeches). Mean to make discourse analysis while studying the description of the novel means being in the Field of text linguistics.

*In discourse analysis we deal with the suprasetehtial level.

For analyzing a text some tools are needed. These tools are taken from Linguistics. They could be the levels of language (Phonemes, morphemes ....)

Or they could be linguistic theories and so far / So on

* In order to make a text plausible, the writer or speaker needs to use cohesive ties.

* Cohesion is achieved by Language itself.

* Coherence is not about Linguistics, but cohesion is about Linguistics

* The meaning of the text is the aim of the Speaker or Writer and this is achieved by coherence and Cohesion.

Why we analyze Language?

The most (or of the most) important subject(s) in linguistics in the recent years has become discourse analysis (acritical discourse analysis CDA which depends on power ideology in specific). (Political discourse).

* Analysis refers to interpretation.

* Language is a reflection of ideology.

* Using his /her experience, a reader can understand even fragments of Language.

*Coherence is the outcome of Cohesion.

* Coherence defends on how people understand language.

* Language gives the reader options.

* Language is characterized by sometimes the language used is condensed or block, e.g. No smoking

* Publicity; good advertisement.

Propaganda ; bad advertisement.

*** Schema:** Something typical ; Pattern. Typical matters that people are used to, impression.

e.g. My neighbour is a MP, but he is honest.

MPS are often known as being dishonest.

*Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is prevailed nowadays, For the purpose of marketing. It deals with Politics.

* Politicians are decision markers.

* Hedges: means avoiding commitment. It is used in Politics.

* Gone with the wind a very famous Film and Novel.

Grice's Maxims

Cooperation. Four important maxims in conversation,

Quality, quantity, relation , manner.

*Always Language is reflection of thoughts.

* we resort to swearing when we lack evidence.

Implicatures

Form and Function

e.g.: A: Can you come with me to the theatre ?

B: I have exam tomorrow (apology)

The Function of this sentence is not related precisely to its Form

Turn Taking

* tum taking means taking roles in a conversation.

* It is a strategy of conversation.

* turn taking is a Principle or theory.

* we use certain strategy to indicate that we finished speaking (ended our role). "Pauses" are one strategy. Rising intonation is a technique used in questions.

* In reality, most people do not pay attention to these strategies

For example a Strategy to indicate role end is the Strategy used by reporters on TV while, negotiating with hosts. The hosts. They mention the name of the host in order to give him or her the opportunity to speak.

Chapter 13

First Language Acquisition

* Child Language.

* Children Listen to the Language (the speech of others (the environment) and they repeat it (repetition and habit formation).

* Most of the children can produce novel utterances. So, it is not morally done by repetition but it is rather a matter of innate Capacity and Creativity.

* Children acquire not only vocabulary, bet also rules.

* When a child utters the verb clean" in the past they add- ed at the end of it in order to make it past. Here they fallow and apply a rule. When the child wants to say "give" in the past they make it "gived" applying the same rule. This is analogy. Also tooth, toots, foot, foots .....

*For Linguists, the age of 12 is very critical.

*The left Part (hemisphere) is the area a language. There is a loop that is responsible for language.

*It is approved that everyone is equipped with a language acquiring device LAD. This device declines after the age of 12 it stops because it is no longer used. This is from a linguistic point of view. Other aspects regarding culture and values are dealt with in Paralinguistic.

* Children begin speaking often at the age of 18 months (this is not a decisive number. There number represent experimental facts / evidence.

* The case of the girl Genie' is a clear evidence that proves the existence of LAD.

* Some Linguists claim that language acquisition is related to genetics, but this is not correct.

*Children's Language suffers at first months of speaking from many discrepancies.

*A caregiver Language is used by adults to address young children. It is the using of the Children's' own language when addressing them.

*Semantic extention and analogy in certain levels of children's' age is a very important point in linguistics. For example, every rounded object may be considered as "ball" by children.

The Period during which the child acquires his Language.

*There are Stages:

Cooing (First): at this stage the child begins moving his /her organs: The organs of speech. At the beginning, the child begins to produce the sound /È/. Thus sound is produced accidentally

* Babbling: from Babel

During the babbling Stage, the child can utter many sounds and again unconsciously/ accidentally.

*The One word Stage:

Producing words (baba, mama) are the most famous words are condensed. (one word may refer to a phrase or a whole sentence).

* The Two words Stage:

The child here is able to recognize grammatical structures or a categories. He can connect words together. Only main words are used in a sub-conscious manner.

* The Telegraphic Stage:

The child begins to make a cut-line between words that are not important and those which important. Important or necessary words are kept and other (Like Function Words) are ignored.

*When using Semantic extension, the child applies rules, This is a good point.

Chapter 14

Second Language Acquisition

***Second Language** is the language that is used in society in real life situations beside the first language or (mother tongue Language).

***** **Foreign Language** is the language that is taught but is not used in real life situations it is used in close circles.

* In India there is a phenomenon prevailing lingua France.

***** **A Lingua France** is the language that you use when you travel to a country, you don't speak Its native language. The Langue Franca in this case is (may be) the Second language in that country. (a third medium).

***** **Applied Linguistics:** applying Linguistic theories in reality.

*For every theory there is rationed either from Linguistics or from Psychology.

* Approach vs. Method.

*Communicative competence : to know and use the language.

* The previous method of teaching English in Iraq was the ALM. Now the Communicative approach is used.

Methods of Teaching

1 The Grammar translation Method

-It flourished in about 18th century.

-It was used to translate and teach Latin and Greek which are dead languages.
-Latin and Greek are the languages of Scholarship.

- One of the disadvantages of this method is that the language it is concerned with are dead; there is not any communication.

- Listening, speaking, reading and writing each skill should take 25% of students' time (in learning). but the GT Method neglected that.

-The direct method appeared after the GT method. It was highly affected influenced by the new science (at 1920s) Phonetics, Pronunciation.

* This method was based on the Principle that first Language acquisition and second language learning are similar process, if you want to learn a foreign language. Listen too much to the language.

But Actually first Language acquisition is different from second foreign Language learning

* It was called direct because:

1. There is direct association between learners and the foreign language; the meaning of Learning and Teaching is always the target language always inside the classroom is defect because s time and effort consuming. It is like making (round about) abut the meaning.

2- There is a direct association between objects and actions and the learners at the other hand. The method used the technique of pointing again this was a defect in 1920s, difficultly in explaining the material; objects and actions were limited

*The teacher inside the classroom uses techniques, while students use strategies.

*The direct method failed because of its foundation(base); second learning is the same of….

***After the direct method had failed the Reading method appeared in 1930.**

*Reading as a technique is classified into silent and loud reading.

*Reading as a process is classified into intensive and extensive reading.

*Intensive reading: you read when there is the teacher present.

*Extensive reading: you read when there is no teacher present.

*Reading means reading to understand, reading comprehension.

*when there is teacher meaning is explained.

*Enough time and variety of topics are important factors in reading.

*The demerits of extensive reading: no enough time for all students, some students feel frightened when the teacher is present.

*Reading for recreation(at home) helps in learning a foreign language.

*Literary reader; simplified versions of literary works are supplemented with books for students.

*In 1941 the Reading meth one od was replaced by the Audio-lingual method.

The Audio-lingual method

This method was a very influential method. Its era was called the audio-lingual era. It was employed in teaching languages for about half a century.

*Aural, Oral; listening and speaking; audio-lingual it appeared during the world war II in early 1940s.

*The method was invented and developed by the war in 1941. The Army was obliged to fight in Europe. Speak many languages of friends and enemies. They needed to learn languages in a quick way. This was the first factor that attached the appearance of the method.

*The second factor was the theory of behaviourism by skinner. Skinner came to the theory "we can learn any social skill by repetition."

Then the U.S Army established the theory of habit-formation. This theory was supported by the factors "stimulus-response reinforcement".

*The method was based on repetition , this was one of the method at the same time.

-All the languages of the Indian tribes (in American) were oral (haven't written system) this made a linguists reach to the point conclusion that all languages are oral. By that the Audio-lingual method was also affected and hence it ignored or delayed writing. This was also a defect.

***Structuralism:** dealing with languages as structures. Students should master the structures of the language. Grammar was not focused on, about 50% of the curriculum was oral exercises (structures).

This was (structuralism) another factor that affected the method.

The Descriptive Approach vs. The Prescriptive Approach

*The method was affected by descriptive approach.

*whatever is said, in English, by native speaker is from the language.

***Because of all the factors, this method raised 5 slogans**:

1- Language is speech.

2-Language is habit formation.

3-Language is what its native speakers say not what linguists say ought to be.

4-Language change.

6-Languages are different.

*Language laboratories appeared(Labs).

*The strong relationship between language and culture was also introduced for the first time.

*The Audio-lingual method gives priority to listening and speaking, and delays reading and writing. It focuses the oral skills.

*Writing means writing compositions or essays and not only writing.

*The method focuses on accurate pronunciation and that learners should have near native accent, the RP should be followed only.

The teacher should be provide the learners with a suitable model for pronunciation

-Errors are not allowed because the method is based on behaviourism (repetition. Habit formation).

-Grammatical rules are left to the lower extent; Grammar teaching is based on deduction.

-Examples, most of them, should be put in pattern drills(oral practice).

-Pattern; mechanic drills(based on structuralism).

-In the mid 1917 the methods was criticized. Because of the delaying of reading and writing at one hand . At the other hand, because it neglects the ability of humans(Skinner made his experiment on animals; behaviourism). Mimicry was focused (a defect).