IN THIS CHAPTER

- Looking at the definition of *language*
- Highlighting what you need to learn a new language
- Understanding the components of communication
- Considering the functions of language
- Outlining the branches of linguistics

Chapter 1
Craving a New Language

Thinking of learning a new language? Wonderful! You're in the right place. Since you're reading this book, I'm guessing that you're pretty enthusiastic about learning a new language. If so, you already have a key ingredient for such a journey: your motivation!

In this chapter, you get an overview of the process of learning a new language. I start by defining what language is. It seems like a simple term, but *linguists* (people who study language) have pondered over how to define language for years. I also explain the importance of knowing more than one language in today's world and becoming part of the bilingual (or multilingual) team; then I dive into what communication is and discuss its components, as well as its features and functions. Finally, I briefly mention some of the disciplines that study language.

TIP

If you want to learn a language you can use with many speakers, here's a fun fact: The most spoken languages around the globe (as a native speaker and as a second language) are English, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, French, and Modern Standard Arabic. You can find out more about choosing a language to learn in Chapter 11.

Defining What "Language" Means

Language is a natural human ability that we acquire effortlessly by merely being exposed to it and using it to communicate with other members of our language community. Language is essential in our lives to maintain social interactions because it helps us express thoughts, ideas, desires, emotions, and culture.

Language also is a form of self-identity. Yes, that's right! The way you speak and the language you use reveal a lot about your identity and your culture. Think about it: When you hear someone talking, can you guess if they're from your area or not? Can you guess their age or gender? What about their socioeconomic status? Can you guess if they're native speakers of the language or language learners? It's not uncommon to answer yes to all or most of these questions. That's what I mean when I say that language is a form of self-identity.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Technically speaking, languages are formed by arbitrary signs (words) that are governed by certain rules (grammar). (You can read more about the arbitrariness of words in the later section "Recognizing special design features.") Despite their complexity, languages are systematic and rule-governed, so linguists are able to study them in a scientific way. Thanks to the rules that govern languages, members of a speech community produce and understand an infinite number of sentences.

Most researchers agree that humans are born already programmed to learn languages, and some structures in our brains are specialized for language processing. So, some of the work is already done for you, without any visible effort!

A FEW FUN FACTS ABOUT LANGUAGES

If you haven't decided which language you want to learn yet, you have many to choose from! According to Ethnologue (`www.ethnologue.com/`), which is one of the most important online sources of information about languages, there are more than 7,000 languages in the world! Here's some interesting data about these languages:

- About 90 percent of the world population speaks 700 of these languages.
- More than 50 percent of the population speaks 23 of these languages.
- Eighty-five percent of the people in the world use either Asian or European languages.
- Forty percent of these languages (more than 3,000 languages) are endangered languages (they have fewer than 1,000 users).

Gaining a Superpower by Learning a New Language

Learning new languages is an exciting and rewarding task! Bilinguals can communicate with more people than monolinguals do, and languages give you the opportunity to discover different cultures and provide broader perspectives of the world and humanity. Talk about a superpower!

And learning languages isn't as difficult as some people may think; note that you've already acquired at least one language — the one you're using now to read this book. You may only need some guidance on how to achieve your goal to learn a new one. Furthermore, you may have heard that the more languages you learn, the easier it becomes to learn a new one. So, go for it! The following sections explain what you need to learn a new language and give an overview of the benefits of language learning.

Knowing what you need up front

You need a few ingredients for a successful experience when learning a new language so that you can join the bilingual (or multilingual) superpower team sooner rather than later. (I explain all of them in detail throughout this book.) To learn a language, you need the following:

- **Strong motivation:** Learning a language should feel like a joyful act. You should feel the excitement within you, like the butterflies you feel when you see someone you're dating. You shouldn't feel pushed/obliged to learn it; you should have an intense desire to do so.

  
  TIP

  To help you find your motivation, try writing down at least five reasons why you want to learn a particular language. For example, suppose you want to learn French so you can travel around France more easily, speak with friends and family members who live there, read French literature in its original form, watch French movies without subtitles, and enjoy French restaurants even more by reading the menus in French.

- **Time and consistency:** I suggest spending at least 15 minutes on your new language every day. It's better to dedicate some time to it on a daily basis than to spend many hours working on it only once a week.

  
  TIP

  Try to connect learning a language with your daily life. For example, while your coffee is brewing, use those spare minutes to read in your new language, listen to music in the language, review flashcards, and so on. You can also change your email/phone settings to your new language, try watching TV and

movies in your new language, or write your to-do list in your new language. These repetitive actions will be a huge help in your learning progress!

- **Resources:** You need to find compelling books, dictionaries, audiovisual material, and similar resources in your target language. Being repeatedly exposed to diverse material that uses your new language will help you retain that language.

  If possible, find native or proficient speakers of the language to practice with. This is a really valuable resource! You can reach out to local universities or be on the lookout for local language clubs that meet periodically; pay attention to the bulletin boards in coffee shops, libraries, and universities. You can also use online apps to find conversation partners. I share some online apps and sites you can use in Chapter 14.


TIP

- **A feeling of relaxation:** You shouldn't feel stressed out when learning or practicing the language. You need to feel comfortable and accept the idea that making mistakes is part of the deal. In the language-learning field, we refer to that as having a *low affective filter.* You can read more about the importance of the affective filter in Chapter 7.
- **A plan:** Consider your motivation and goals, and outline the steps you will follow to reach that goal. The clearer your plan is, the easier it will be to implement it. See Chapter 12 for details.
- **A handle on basic vocabulary:** Building your vocabulary is especially important in the beginning of the learning process; learning words is even more important than mastering the language structure (grammar). You can start by learning everyday vocabulary, and words that are linked to your interests and hobbies. See Chapter 13 for details.

  Note that you can communicate with others using just individual words. Grammatical accuracy comes with time, and it shouldn't be the focus for novice learners. Traditional classroom teaching can help a lot when it's time to polish your grammar.


REMEMBER

Seeing the benefits of being bilingual (or multilingual) in the world

Defining bilingualism or multilingualism isn't an easy task, and consequently, measuring the number of bilinguals in the world is equally difficult. Actually, no official data about bilingualism exists. However, some researchers, such as François Grosjean, say that half or slightly more than half of the world's population is bilingual, and others, such as Colin Baker, state that the number is between 50 percent and 70 percent.

Normally the census of a country doesn't ask whether members of its population are bilingual, but the census may ask about the languages they know, which is

used to calculate the number of bilingual speakers. However, we still have the difficulty of deciding what being bilingual means or what knowing a language entails. Some countries, such as Switzerland, have a more restrictive view of the definition of bilingualism than others, such as the United States. So, as you can see, obtaining reliable data about the number of bilinguals in the world isn't an easy task.

What's clear is that in some countries and on some continents (such as Asia and Africa), bilingualism/multilingualism is very common; in others (such as Europe), more than half of the population speaks at least two languages (although two of Europe's largest countries, Great Britain and France, don't have much bilingualism). The United States is one of the few developed countries where learning languages isn't a priority.

Speaking two or more languages isn't a modern feat; it has existed forever, since communities with different languages had to communicate with each other. In fact, two major causes of bilingualism are

- **Trade and business:** For example, nowadays people use English to conduct business, but during the third and fourth centuries BCE, buyers and sellers used Greek to trade in the Mediterranean.
- **The movement of people for political, religious, social, educational, or economic reasons:** For example, people living in regions with political or religious conflicts migrate to other countries searching for a more stable and peaceful life. Likewise, people move in search of better work or educational opportunities.

REMEMBER

Being multilingual in our diverse world is generally considered to be a great asset. Organizations such as the United Nations support multilingualism because of its benefits to the global community. Additionally, research supports the idea that multilingualism provides a wide array of benefits that range from academic to cognitive, cultural, and even economic ones. Being part of the bilingual superpower team gives you opportunities you otherwise wouldn't have. Bilingualism can open doors for you personally, academically, and professionally. You can find out more about the advantages of learning new languages in Chapter 4.

Uncovering Communication Categories, Components, and Design Features

Language is the main character in the language-learning process, but it isn't the only one. Language is the tool we need to communicate with other members of our community. Thus, communication is another main character in this

language-learning play. In the following sections, I define *communication*, describe its different modes, discuss its components, and explain how these components work together to deliver the diverse functions of language.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Professor Milton Azevedo and other linguists define language as a social behavior that only humans possess and that is manifested through the creative employment of signs. These signs are arbitrary and part of an ordered system. Having an ordered system allows us to communicate with others and share our cultural expression in a wide variety of contexts.

Specifying communication categories

Communication has been defined in various ways by many linguists. In a paper published in 2017, well-known language scholar Bill VanPatten defines communication as "the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning with a purpose in a given context."

In other words, communication involves people articulating ideas so that others comprehend them, and if a breakdown in communication happens, they need to negotiate the intended meaning. Language exchanges need to be purposeful and meaningful in the context where they happen.

REMEMBER

Communication can be classified as one-way or two-way communication.

- *One-way communication* refers to communication that doesn't require a reply. For instance, when you read an online news site, you're receiving one-way communication because you're reading and interpreting the meaning of the words, but you aren't expected to reply to the site. Another example is a reporter transmitting the news on TV. The reporter is just informing viewers, not expecting to interact with them.
- On the other hand, *two-way communication* entails a give-and-take between the people participating in the communication. One person produces language, and the other reacts to the language produced. There may be some negotiation of meaning between the two participants in the communicative act.

REMEMBER

ACTFL (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; see Chapter 3) divides communication into three modes:

- **Interpretive communication** is a one-way communication that entails understanding and deciphering messages. It can be in the form of reading (for example, the newspaper), listening (for example, to the radio) or viewing (for example, a movie).

- **Interpersonal communication** is a two-way communication where the participants exchange information and negotiate meaning. Interpersonal communication can be done by speaking (for example, chatting with your friends) or writing (for example, sending text messages).
- **Presentational communication** is a one-way communication where the speaker/writer delivers information to an audience, but has no expectation of receiving an answer from the audience.

TECHNICAL STUFF

When you think of communication, you may often picture interpersonal communication, where two people share information. Communication comes from the Latin *communicare,* which means "to share," "to make common," or "to inform." In fact, its root is *communis,* which means "shared by all, common, public." When you communicate, you share information and make it common knowledge. You may recognize other English words that come from the same root, such as community. Interesting, right?

We communicate for many different purposes, such as to exchange information; transmit ideas; express wishes, emotions, and feelings; describe language itself or talk about abstract concepts; have fun with language; recreate or retell the past; or even invent the future. You can find out more about the different uses of language in communication in the later section "Clarifying Various Language Functions."

Examining components of the communication chain

Figure 1-1 shows how the communication chain works and the way we communicate our ideas.

REMEMBER

In order for human communication to happen, you need to consider these main ingredients:

- The *interlocutors,* or users (the sender/source and the receiver), are the participants in the communication. Humans and most animals can exchange their sender and receiver role at any moment in their communicative exchange.
- The *message* is the idea, knowledge, or feeling you want to transmit, or what you receive and need to interpret.
- The *code* is the language used to transmit messages. Once you know the message or content you want to transmit, you need to codify it in the language you're using, according to the rules of that language. Afterwards, the receiver will decodify your language to understand the message.

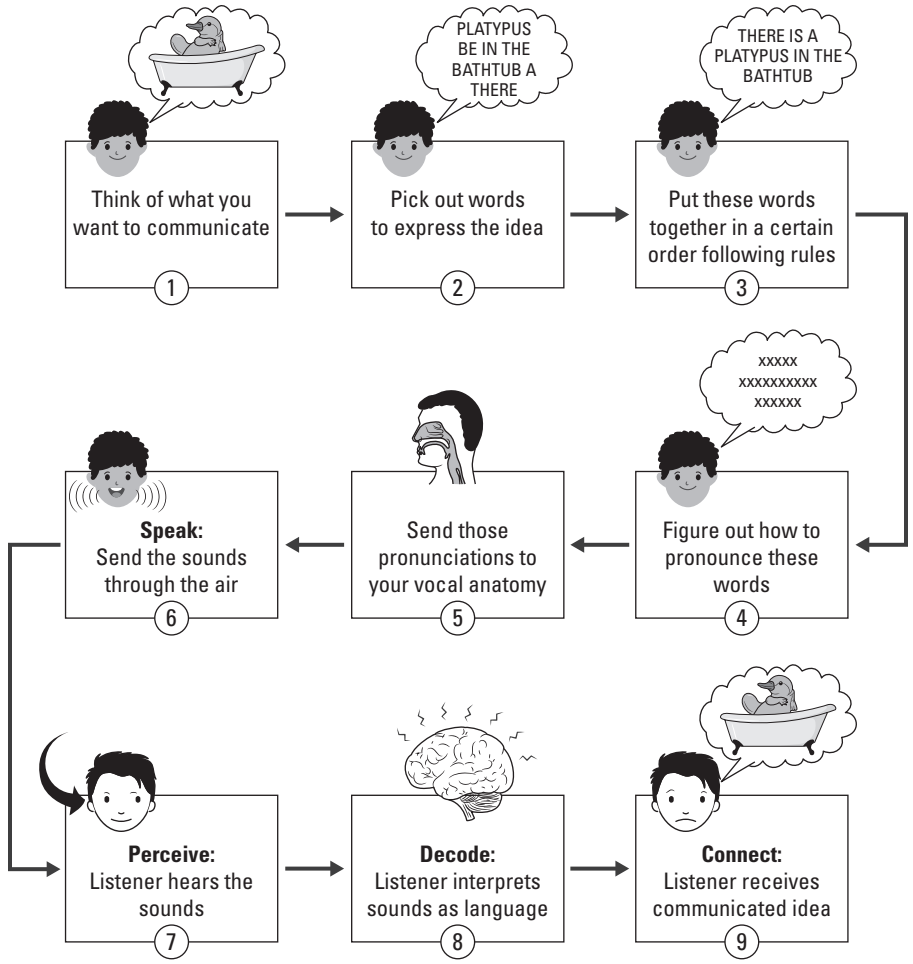

FIGURE 1-1: The communication chain.

Obviously, for communication to be successful, the interlocutors need to know the code: its sounds (or its written form), the meaning of the words used, and how words are conveyed in sentences (grammar).

- The *medium* is the channel used to transmit the message from the sender to the receiver. Nowadays, cell phones are a very popular medium used to transmit messages.
- The *context* (setting) is the physical place where the communication occurs. The context may affect the message or the way you use the code. For

instance, think of the way you would explain the reason for a sick day if you're at a bar with friends as compared to being in the office with your boss. You would express it differently, right?

- *Feedback* is the verbal or nonverbal response you give to the other interlocutor(s) to indicate that the message was received (or not), or to ask for clarification and the like. Feedback helps the interlocutors ensure that the communication was successful.

You can see how these components work together in Figure 1-1.

Recognizing special design features

Communication has a series of characteristics called *design features* (a term coined by linguist Charles Hockett in the 1960s). Although both animals and humans communicate, our communications don't share the same design features. In fact, only humans use a sophisticated form of communication: language.

Table 1-1 provides an overview of all the design features of communication. You can see which features are shared by all communication systems and which ones are special to humans.

TABLE 1-1 Overview of Communication Design Features

	Design Features
All communication systems	A mode of communication
	Semanticity
	Pragmatic function
Some communication systems	Interchangeability
	Cultural transmission
	Arbitrariness
	Discreteness
Only humans (language)	Displacement
	Productivity
	Prevarication
	Reflexivity

REMEMBER

What all communication systems have

All communication systems have these three characteristics:

- **A medium/mode of communication:** This design feature refers to how messages are transmitted — how they are produced and perceived. Most humans and animals communicate using an *auditory-vocal* mode of communication: The vocal system transmits sounds, and the auditory system receives them.

  Other modes of communication used by some animals and humans are *visual-gestural* (used in sign languages, where messages are transmitted via hand, arm, head, and facial movements and received visually) and *chemical-olfactory* (some moths communicate messages with a chemical medium called *pheromones*).

  You'll use a new language mainly by communicating through sounds (auditory-vocal mode), but you'll also use the visual mode (to read print, watch video, or use sign languages).

- **Semanticity:** This feature assumes that all signals in a communication system must mean something and that the interlocutors can understand it. For instance, if I say *book* to you, I expect that you and I have a similar idea of what *book* means.

- **Pragmatic function:** This feature refers to the fact that we use communication systems for a purpose. We produce messages to inform or influence other community members, to keep them alive, to learn new information, and the like. For example, animals use signs to indicate alarm and to indicate the source and quality of food, and humans can convey a wide variety of intentions.

What some communication systems have

While the preceding design features are shared by all communication systems, other design features are found only in certain communication systems. Of course, human communications have all these features:

- **Interchangeability:** The users (sender and receiver) can exchange roles: I can be the sender of the message first, and a moment later I can be the receiver of some other message. Moreover, the same person can be the sender and the receiver (when you talk to yourself, for example). Not all organisms can have both roles. For instance, male silkworm moths are only receivers; they cannot send messages.

- **Cultural transmission:** Even if it's true that humans are preprogrammed to acquire languages (the *Language Acquisition Device*), we need social interaction and input from other users to learn a language and its conventions. These interactions also transmit the culture of the speech community. You cannot acquire a language in isolation; you need to be in contact and interact with other users to learn it. For example, male white-crowned sparrows learn their "dialect" songs from older males during their first three months after birth; male humpback whales also have their own song that evolves in contact with other humpback whales. Find out more about cultural transmission in Chapter 2.
- **Arbitrariness:** Why do we call a certain four-legged animal *dog* in English? That same animal may be called *perro* in Spanish or *chien* in French by another person. The reason behind all these names is that words (linguistic signs) are arbitrary. No intrinsic (underlying) association exists between the form (signal, what something is called) and the meaning (what it refers to), or among the elements in the communicative system and their meaning. Some animals show some variations or "dialects," such as the songs used by humpback whales in the South Pacific.
- **Discreteness:** Some communication systems are formed of small, discrete (separate), and repeatable units (sounds, words) that connect to form meaningful messages. For instance, languages have sounds that, on their own, don't mean anything. However, when they're combined in a linear sequence of smaller discrete units, they can form words with their own meanings. These individual units differ from one another, and together they create syllables, words, sentences, and ultimately messages. This feature allows simplicity and linguistic economy. Some apes, dolphins, and parrots show some signs of discreteness.

What only human communication systems have

And now we get to the design features unique to humans, and only possible using language:

- **Displacement:** Humans can use language to talk about events that happened in a different place and time from the here and now, or the moment in which they're speaking. All languages have ways to express temporal and spatial displacement, because indicating time and space is important information to be shared among speakers. Some languages use *inflections* (changes in form) to indicate time displacement (for example, the *-ed* in *worked*), or they can use prepositional phrases (for example, *at home*) or adverbs (for example, *yesterday*) to indicate displacement in space and time.

Although displacement is a human communication design feature, some people think that bees can also express displacement. To a certain extent, that's true. Bees can indicate the orientation and distance to a food source, as well as its quality, through certain dance moves. However, bee dances are very strict and can use only certain postures and gestures to express very specific information.

- **Productivity:** Obeying the rules that govern each language (to combine sounds and form morphemes, words, and sentences), humans can give new names to new items, actions, or events and create completely brand-new sentences never heard or produced before. Only humans can use a finite number of linguistic elements (although these elements may change) to produce an infinite number of sentences. Animals, on the other hand, have a closed system of communication, and they cannot combine the diverse, discrete units to create new ones.
- **Prevarication:** Humans can use language to lie (*prevarication* is just a fancy word for lying). In general, animals cannot lie. (Interestingly, however, linguist Charles Hockett has proposed that some primates, including gibbons and guenons, can lie to achieve a goal.)
- **Reflexivity:** This term refers to using the code to talk about the code. For instance, I use language to explain features of language itself. This is a communication design feature that only humans have.

Clarifying Various Language Functions

The members of a linguistic community use language to communicate and to accomplish certain goals. For instance, you can use language to communicate messages, ideas, or needs, to convey emotions and desires, and to bring about certain actions, as well as to just have fun with the language (telling jokes, creating poems, and so on).

To be more specific, linguist Roman Jakobson proposed six language functions: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic. The following list goes over what each function entails. (Note that in some descriptions I use terms I introduce in the earlier section "Examining components of the communication chain.")

- **Referential:** Language is used to share knowledge or information, to communicate observations and thoughts, to describe people/places/things, or to talk about things in general.

- **Emotive (expressive, affective):** The focus of this function is the sender, or *I*. Language is used to express how the sender feels and their attitudes toward things.


TIP

  Because cultures vary, you need to be aware of cultural and social norms when you express your feelings in a new language. You need to understand how and when you can express your feelings, and consider the context of where you are and to whom you're expressing your feelings and emotions. If you already know which language you want to learn, you may want to do a quick search online to find some of the culture's rules or expectations about expressing emotions. For instance, you can check how to say you're full and don't want to eat any more without hurting anyone's feelings.

- **Conative:** The focus of this function is on the receiver of the message: It's a *you* function. The sender uses language to persuade or to influence others. They may use *vocatives* (direct address) and *imperatives* (commands and requests) to persuade the receiver (for example, "Girls! Come here now!").

- **Phatic:** This function refers to the small talk that keeps social communication going. It's the language people use in everyday interactions when they say, "Hi, how are you?" and respond, "I'm okay, thank you!" or pick up the phone and say *hello* in English or *dígame* (tell me) in Spanish. In these exchanges, the intention is to say, "I am here, I acknowledge your presence, and I am ready for communication."


TIP

  Your everyday communications are full of examples of this function. Sometimes you talk just for the sake of talking and having a conversation, without paying much attention to the information you're sharing. You normally use phatic words to open communication (hello), maintain communication (okay, aha, hmmm), verify information (really?), or end a conversation (bye). Search online for ways to start or end a conversation in the language you're planning to learn.

- **Metalingual (metalinguistic, reflexive):** In this function, language is used to explain or talk about language itself. That's exactly what I'm doing here. Dictionaries also have a metalingual function.

- **Poetic (aesthetic):** The focus of this function is on the message and how it's used. For example, language can be used creatively or artistically (in poems, literary pieces, wordplay, slogans, titles, and the like). People can also use language to entertain themselves or others (telling jokes, riddles, and so on).


WARNING

  The poetic function can be hard to grasp as a novice language learner. Many jokes are especially difficult for a new speaker to understand because of the cultural and historical references they normally have.

But language functions aren't just black-and-white: One sentence or phrase can have multiple functions at the same time. For instance, if I enter my classroom

and say to the students sitting there, "Oh no! It's hot in this classroom," my statement may be interpreted in different ways, or I may intend different outcomes, such as

- I may be informing the students of the fact that it's hot.
- I may be expressing how I feel about the heat in the classroom.
- I may want someone to open the windows or turn the air-conditioning on.

So, that single sentence entails different goals and has different functions: referential, emotive, and conative, respectively. In other words, it's doing a lot of work!

Embracing Essential Branches in Linguistics

In this chapter I explain and discuss a lot about language and communication, but I don't refer much to linguistics — until now! *Linguistics* is the science that studies language and communication. Linguists want to understand how language works. In this section I briefly explain some of the most important branches of linguistics.

Phonetics and phonology: Working with sounds

Phonetics and phonology are two branches of linguistics that study speech sounds, but in different ways:

- *Phonetics* studies the physiology of sounds; in other words, it dissects speech sounds, and it studies how to pronounce them and how you perceive them. These individual sounds are called *phones.*
- *Phonology* studies how sounds combine with each other to convey meaning.

TIP

Phonemes are sounds in a language that trigger a difference in meaning, and each language has its own set of phonemes. For example, in English, exchanging the sounds [k] (used to pronounce the "c") and [p] respectively in *can* and *pan* triggers a different meaning. In linguistics, we say that these two sounds are *contrastive.* When learning a new language, you need to be familiar with all the

contrastive sounds. You may find some of the same contrastive sounds in your native language (*L1*), and some other sounds may be new to you. You'll have more difficulty learning sounds that aren't contrastive in your L1. Learning to distinguish and produce contrastive sounds is essential to gain proficiency in a language.

Morphology: Building words

Morphology is the branch of linguistics that deals with how words are formed. These parts of the words are called *morphemes,* and they are the smallest units in a language that carry meaning by themselves.

For instance, consider the words *cat*, *talk,* and *small.* Each word has its own meaning, but you can add extra morphemes to these words and get more meaning out of them, as in *cats*, *talked,* and *smaller.* The *-s* in *cats* is a morpheme that indicates more than one, the *-ed* in *talked* is a morpheme that carries the meaning of past tense, and the *-er* in *smaller* indicates a comparison with another entity.

Learning how to produce/comprehend meanings with the different morphemes of a language helps you enlarge your vocabulary repertoire quite a lot and enhance your language proficiency. However, these morphemes take time to acquire.

Syntax: Creating sentences

Syntax is the branch of linguistics that studies the rules and patterns we follow to combine words to create sentences. Using a finite number of vocabulary words, we can create billions of different sentences that can be understood by other speakers of the language. These sentences will vary in their complexity, but all of them will follow certain rules and patterns. If speakers don't follow these rules and patterns, people cannot understand each other.

Keep in mind that the sentence structure of some languages already tells you a lot about meaning. For example, if you read the following sentence in English, you'll probably know more than you think at first glance:

> The cateps spoared the motkishes.

Can you guess who does the action (the subject) in this sentence? Which word is the verb? Who receives the action (the object) of the verb? I'm almost certain you guessed that *the cateps* is the subject of the verb *spoared,* and the receiver of the action of the verb is *the motkishes*. Not only that, by looking at the morphemes that end these unfamiliar words (*-s*, *-ed,* and *-es*), you know the subject and the object

are plural, and the verb is in the past tense. And you can even test yourself a little more and form a *passive-voice* sentence (the object of the verb comes first, and the subject goes after the verb) out of the first sentence:

> The motkishes were spoared by the cateps.

You can do all that thanks to the rules that govern the English language, both morphological rules (adding *-s* or *-es* to nouns to make them plural or *-ed* to verbs to indicate past tense; see the previous section) and syntactic rules (in *active-voice* sentences, such as the first sentence, the subject goes before the verb, and the receiver of the action goes afterward).

If you're thinking you still don't know the meaning of these two sentences, that's normal, because I used made-up words to give you this example. I just wanted to show you that you know a lot more about syntax and morphology than you may have thought.

Semantics: Understanding meaning

Semantics is the branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of words. Besides the definition you find in dictionaries, the meaning of words can be linked closely to your personal and cultural background. For instance, if I ask you to think of a house and describe it, your description may differ from the description someone in China, the Congo, or Alaska would give me.

Pragmatics: Getting meaning in context

Pragmatics studies meaning in conversations within the context where the conversation happens. It focuses on how language (and nonverbal communication) is used in conversation, and how a conversation works (think about principles or maxims, and turn-taking).

For example, if I ask my friend, "Do you have any chewing gum?" what I am actually asking is that my friend give me a piece of gum. So, if my friend answers *yes* and doesn't give me a piece of gum, they don't understand the pragmatics of this sentence in English.

Other branches of linguistics

Many other branches of linguistics exist, including the following:

- *Sociolinguistics* examines how different social aspects affect the use of language, and even how language helps individuals represent their identity. Sociolinguists look at the way people of different age groups, economic status, genders, professions, and so on speak and use language. For instance, it's very possible you associate the expression *What's up?* with a certain age group, gender, and/or another identity.
- *Historical linguistics* studies language change over time, and it can trace back some relationships between languages.
- *Neurolinguistics* is the branch of linguistics that studies brain activity as people receive or produce language, and how the information moves in the areas of the brain that process language.
- *Psycholinguistics* analyzes how the different linguistic processes happen in the brain, the mechanisms that help us produce and comprehend language (for example, sentence processing and speech perception), as well as how we acquire languages (first and second). Psycholinguists also look at how other cognitive capacities, such as short-term and long-term memory, help language processing.