

Language paper

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



Language is something that generally every human has as a form of communication. It can be in the form of verbal words, in the form of written words, or even in the form of signed words, but it is something that as humans we all use in one way or another. The need for language evolved as a way for people to express their thoughts, their feelings and emotions, and even their fears. Humans needed a way to communicate with each other to express things that normally couldn't be expressed. This paper is going to set out to cover language.

It will cover the definition of language and lexicon, as well as evaluate the key features of language. The paper will describe the four levels of the language structure and processing as well as analyze the role of language processing in cognitive psychology. While it seems so simple, language is a complex as well as fascinating cognitive function that will be explored more in this paper. Language and Lexicon If a person were asked to define language they would probably just comment on the fact of verbal communication.

In fact the true definition of language is that it is a systematic means of communicating by the use of sounds or conventional symbols (Caplan, 2007). When a person talks about lexicon they are literally talking about a person's vocabulary. According to Caplan, lexicon's definition is that it is a language's vocabulary or the language user's knowledge of words (2007). As stated above language is a cognitive function that is actually part of a process called the linguistic process. The linguistic process allows a person to be able to not only produce communication, but to be able to understand it as well.

This concept will be explored more throughout the paper. When people speak about the structure of language it is generally useful to think of it as having four levels. The four levels include, speech sounds or phonemes, words, sentences, and groups of sentences or texts (Willingham, 2007). The lowest level phonemes, which are basically speech sounds, are where the analysis of the sounds that make up words comes in. Phonemes are basically the individual sounds of speech that correspond to the letters in the alphabet of the person trying to use communication.

If a person just looks at just the English language they would find that there are 46 phonemes. Worldwide a person would find about 200 phonemes (Willingham, 2007). Continuing on with the English language, the 46 phonemes that correspond with each letter of the alphabet combine in different ways in order to create the roughly 600, 000 words contained in the English language alone. In each language there are certain rules when it comes to phonemes stating how the phonemes can be combined and where they can appear in a word (Willingham, 2007).

An example of one of the rules in the English language is that a stop consonant cannot appear more than once at the beginning of a word. Phonemes are the first levels that are combined to create words, which are the second level. After that it goes into the third level in which words combine together to create sentences. Of course a person can't just combine any words in order to make sentences, there are rules involved with this just as there are rules involved with making words. In order for a sentence to be

understandable and be proper in structure a person must include proper grammar as well as proper order in the sentence itself.

The last level of language structure and processing is grouping sentences together or making text. When a person talks about text they are referring to a group of sentences that combine together and that are related in order to make a paragraph or a group of paragraphs. In order to make a proper text there has to be a connection between the sentences involved in the text. The sentences in the text have to relate to each other, they have to make sense, and lastly they must have logical connections that make each sentence relevant to the previous sentence.

Language is defined by five basic properties that are deemed critical for language. The properties include communicative, arbitrary, structured, generative, and dynamic. The first property, communicative, is a property because as it describes it permits one person to communicate with another person. Next in the properties is arbitrary, which is the fact that the relationship between language's elements and their meaning is arbitrary. When it comes to symbols, arbitrariness is one of the key features.

A sound can stand for a meaning, but as to which sound stands for which meaning is considered arbitrary (Willingham, 2007). While language is arbitrary, it is at the same time structured as well. Basically meaning the pattern of symbols is not arbitrary at all. Next is the fact that language is also generative. The basic units of language such as words can be used to build any number of meanings. Finally, language is dynamic because it is not

just static. According to Willingham, language is changing constantly as new words are added and the rules of grammar slowly and subtly change (2007).

Language Processing in Cognitive Psychology Language is a remarkable process when it is looked at on a cognitive level. As far as language is concerned, humans are the only being on earth that possesses the ability to be able to communicate through language. When it comes to a person's basic needs and desires a person has only to communicate them through words for them to be met. Another interesting fact is that a person is able to learn language rapidly and effectively through their childhood, yet as a person grows older language acquisition becomes harder for the person.

When it comes to language processing it plays a key role in cognitive psychology due to the fact that it deciphers the way in which a person is able to communicate as well as process, store, and retrieve the language that they acquire. Conclusion When it comes to humans the primary tool of communication is language. Language is something that generally every human has as a form of communication. It can be in the form of verbal words, in the form of written words, or even in the form of signed words, but it is something that as humans we all use in one way or another.

The need for language evolved as a way for people to express their thoughts, their feelings and emotions, and even their fears. Humans needed a way to communicate with each other to express things that normally couldn't be expressed. Language is one of the remarkable cognitive processes that humans all share and without language it would be difficult to communicate with another person. Without the levels of language or the

rules that are involved with it would probably be difficult for people to understand one another, much less communicate effectively with each other.