



The Study of Language

Eighth Edition

George Yule

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Ms Reda Mohammed , Ph.D. candidate, Linguistics & TESOL,
Illinois State University

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G The game of charades is based on the assumption that we have not lost our ability to use gesture to communicate. Are there patterns of gestures in this game that would provide insight into the kinds of gestures that earlier humans might have used? This is an empirical question. For data, arrange to play and record a game of charades. There is no predetermined answer.

H When it was first identified, the FOXP2 gene was hailed as the “ language gene. ” What was the basis of this claim and how has it been modified?

I The idea that “ ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny ” was first proposed by Ernst Haeckel in 1866 and is still frequently used in discussions of language origins. Can you find a simpler or less technical way to express this idea?

J In his analysis of the beginnings of human language, William Foley comes to the conclusion that “ language as we understand it was born about 200,000 years ago ” ([1997](#) : 73). This is substantially earlier than the dates (between 100,000 and 50,000 years ago) that other scholars have proposed. What kinds of evidence and arguments are typically presented in order to choose a particular date “ when language was born ” ?

K What is the connection between the innateness hypothesis, as described in this chapter, and the idea of a Universal Grammar?

Discussion Topics/Projects

y. er . Note that the word written *yet* is transcribed as [j ɛ t], while the word *jet* is transcribed as [dʒɛ t].

The sounds produced toward the back of the mouth, involving the velum, are represented by the **velars** [k], as in *k i ck* (voiceless), and [g], as in *g a g* (voiced). Note that phonetic [g] is different from typewritten “ g. ” Another velar consonant is [ŋ], called “ angma, ” as in *tho ng* and *ri ng i ng* . There is no [g] sound at the end of these words.

There is one consonant sound produced without the active use of the tongue. It is the [h] sound in *h ave* and *h old* , and the first sound in *wh o* and *wh ose* . This sound is described as a voiceless **glottal** . The “ glottis ” is the space between the vocal folds in the larynx. When the glottis is open, as in the production of other voiceless sounds, and there is no manipulation of the air passing out of the mouth, the sound produced is [h].

A summary of the place of articulation for each consonant is presented in [Table 3.1](#) .

Table 3.1 Place of articulation

Consonants	Voiceless	Voiced	Place of articulation
<i>Bilabials</i>	[p] <i>pet, tape</i>	[b], [m], [w] <i>bet, met, wet</i>	both (=bi) lips (=labia)
<i>Labiodentals</i>	[f] <i>fat, safe</i>	[v] <i>vat, save</i>	upper teeth with lower lip
<i>Dentals</i>	[θ] <i>thin, bath</i>	[ð] <i>then, bathe</i>	tongue tip behind upper teeth
<i>Alveolars</i>	[t], [s] <i>top, sit</i>	[d], [z], [n], [l], [r] <i>dog, zoo, nut, lap, rap</i>	tongue tip to alveolar ridge
<i>Post-alveolars</i>	[ʃ], [ʒ] <i>ship, chip</i>	[ʒ], [dʒ] <i>casual, gem</i>	tongue and back of alveolar ridge
<i>Palatals</i>		[j] <i>yet</i>	tongue and palate
<i>Velars</i>	[k] <i>cat, back</i>	[g], [ŋ] <i>gun, bang</i>	back of tongue and velum
<i>Glottals</i>	[h] <i>hat, who</i>		space between vocal folds

Transcribing Sounds (Not Letters)

A The following transcription was made by Peter Ladefoged of a speech sample of “ a 21-year-old speaker who has lived all her life in Southern California ” and included in the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association* (1999: 41). Most of the phonetic symbols should be familiar, with the exception of [ɹ], which is close to [r], and [ɜ̯] which identifies the sound made when combining a schwa [ə] and [r]-type sound, often written in English as “ er ” or “ ir. ”

Can you produce a written English version of this text?

ðə noʊ θ wɪ nd ə n ð ə s ʌ n w ɜ̯ dɪ spjʊtɪŋ wɪ tʃ w ə z ð ə st
 ʌ ŋgɜ̯ , w ɛ n ə t ʃ æv ə l ɜ̯ kem ə l ʌ ŋ ʃ æptɪ n ə woʊ m kloʊk.
 ðe əgɪ d ð ə t ð ə w ʌ n hu f ɜ̯ st s ə ksɪd ə dɪ n mekɪŋ ð ə t ʃ
 æv ə l ɜ̯ tekɪ z kloʊk ʌ f ʃʊ d bɪ k ə nsɪ d ɜ̯ d st ʌ ŋgɜ̯ ð ə n ðɪ
 ə ð ɜ̯ . ð ɛ n ð ə noʊ θ wɪ nd blu ə z h ʌ d ə z ɪ k ʊ d , b ə t ð ə
 moʊ hɪ blu ð ə moʊ kloʊsli dɪ d ð ə t ʃ æv ɜ̯ fold hɪ z kloʊk ə ʌ ʊ
 ndɪ m; æn ə t læst ð ə noʊ θ wɪ nd g ɛv ʌ p ði ə t ɛ mpt. ð ɛ n
 ð ə s ʌ n ʃ aɪ nd ə ʊ t woʊ mli , ə ndɪ mɪ dɪ ə tli ð ə t ʃ æv ɜ̯ t ʊ
 k ʌ fɪ z kloʊk. ə n so ð ə noʊ θ wɪ nd w ə z ə blə ɪ z tɪ k ə nf ɛ s
 ð ə t ð ə s ʌ n w ə z ð ə st ʌ ŋgɜ̯ ə v ð ə tu.

B We noted that the relationship between the spelling and pronunciation of English words is not always simple. Keeping this in mind, try to provide a basic phonetic representation of the following words.

*although, beauty, bomb, ceiling, charisma, choice, cough,
 exercise, hour, light, phase, quiche, quake, sixteen, thigh,
 tongue, whose, writhe*

C Using a dictionary if necessary, try to decide how each of the following words is usually pronounced. Then, put the words in five lists

crash helmet, crash land, freeze dry, freeze frame, hang glide, hang nail, kick boxer, kick start, skim milk, skim read, sleep mode, sleep walk

J When Hmong speakers (from Laos and Vietnam) settled in the USA, they had to create some new words for the different objects and experiences they encountered. Using the following translations (from Downing and Fuller, [1984](#)), can you work out the English equivalents of the Hmong expressions listed below?

<i>chaw</i> ("place")	<i>kho</i> ("fix")	<i>hlau</i> ("iron")	<i>cai</i> ("right")
<i>dav</i> ("bird")	<i>muas</i> ("buy")	<i>hniav</i> ("teeth")	<i>daim</i> ("flat")
<i>hnab</i> ("bag")	<i>nres</i> ("stand")	<i>looj</i> ("cover")	<i>mob</i> ("sickness")
<i>kev</i> ("way")	<i>ntaus</i> ("hit")	<i>ntoo</i> ("wood")	<i>nqaj</i> ("rail")
<i>kws</i> ("expert")	<i>tos</i> ("wait")	<i>ntawv</i> ("paper")	<i>tshuaj</i> ("medicine")
<i>tsheb</i> ("vehicle")	<i>zaum</i> ("sit")	<i>tes</i> ("hand")	
<i>chawkhmob</i> _____		<i>kwshlau</i> _____	
<i>chawnrestsheb</i> _____		<i>kwskhohniav</i> _____	
<i>chawzaumtos</i> _____		<i>kwsntausntawv</i> _____	
<i>davhlau</i> _____		<i>kwsntoo</i> _____	
<i>hnabloojtes</i> _____		<i>kwskhotsheb</i> _____	
<i>kevcav</i> _____		<i>kwstshuaj</i> _____	
<i>kevkhmob</i> _____		<i>tshebnqajhlau</i> _____	
<i>kevnqajhlau</i> _____		<i>daimntawvmuastshuaj</i> _____	

K The process of borrowing may result in words that have more than one source. Many English words came into the language from Latin via French (e.g. *fl ō r-* > *flour (fleur)* > *flower* and *flour*). Other sources may be more obscure.

For example, we get *tomato* from the Spanish version of *tomatl* , borrowed from Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs in Mexico. Can you work out what contemporary English words came via the same route from the Nahuatl words *ahuacatl* and *ahuacamolli* ?

L The following sets of words, based on Jaggar ([2001](#) : 113), are from Hausa, which is spoken in northern Nigeria and Niger in West Africa. They are **ethnonyms** , that is, nouns that identify a person based on ethnicity or origin. The first column has words for a male (singular), the second column is for a female (singular), and the third

TABLE 7.4 Subjects and Objects in Relative Clauses

Object + Subject	<i>I know a mechanic <u>who repairs old Volvos</u></i>
Object + Object	_____
Subject + Subject	_____
Subject + Object	_____

H If people typically say *little plastic forks* (and not *plastic little forks*) , there must be a preferred order of adjectives before nouns in the grammar of English. In this case, the adjective describing the size (*little*) goes before the adjective describing the material (*plastic*) of the noun (*forks*). How are other categories of adjectives ordered?

(i) Using the underlined examples in the following sentences, identify the other categories and complete the chart in [Table 7.5](#) below to capture the preferred order of descriptive adjectives in evidence here.

(ii) If we wanted to add those adjectives that express a subjective “ opinion ” to the chart (e.g. *beautiful*, *cute*, *horrible*), where would we put them relative to the other types?

(1) *Japanese silk scarves were very popular for many years.*

(2) *The plant has small round pink flowers.*

(3) *The recent European results were not very encouraging .*

(4) *They had uncovered some ancient square stones with carvings on them.*

(5) *It looked like squiggly Arabic writing on the back of the card.*

(6) *She was wearing a white cotton blouse with a short green skirt.*

(7) *Her ring had an oval red ruby surrounded by tiny wedge-shaped diamonds.*

(8) *Eric still drives that big old American car.*

5 What kind of opposites can be identified via the “ negative test ” ?

6 How is the term “ prototype ” used in semantics?

7 Identify the 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.

8 What is the most common collocate of the English word *sarcastic* ?

9 Which of the following words are co-hyponyms?

ant, cabbage, insect, plant, turnip, vegetable.

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

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

11 Which of the following opposites are gradable, non-gradable, or reversible?

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

12 What is the lexical relation between the English words *swallow* (= a small bird) and *swallow* (= make food or drink go down the throat).

13 What is the hierarchical relationship in the meanings of this set of words: *bronchitis, disease, influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis* ?

14 Are the underlined words in these sentences 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.

These are listed on the right, providing a way of analyzing the interaction by identifying what makes it coherent for the participants.

HER: <i>That's the telephone.</i>	(She makes a request of him to perform action)
HIM: <i>I'm in the bath.</i>	(He states reason why he cannot comply with request)
HER: <i>OK.</i>	(She accepts reason)

If this is a reasonable analysis of what took place in the brief interaction, then it is clear that language-users must have a lot of knowledge of how conversation works that is not simply knowledge of words and sentences, but must involve familiarity with a lot of other types of structures and their typical functions.

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.)

(2) *how do you say in English that word ... we say in Spanish "bujía "* (talking about a candlestick)

(3) *the man he play a ... you know ... it makes a [whistles] like that* (talking about a small musical pipe)

(4) *the first you ... like put together and you ... do the next step ... I can ' t ... I ' m sorry* (talking about a plunge coffee maker)

(5) *maybe is something like a rope* (talking about an electrical cord)

(6) *the oval is the big one and the other part is what take to [demonstrates holding the handle of a brush]* (talking about a Christmas tree stand)

G In the following interaction with a native speaker (NS), a non-native speaker (NNS) overcomes an initial difficulty caused by the pronunciation of an English word (transcribed as in Pica (1987: 6)). Can you describe this speaker ' s performance in terms of strategic competence?

NNS: *and they have the chwach there*

NS: *the what?*

NNS: *the chwach – I know someone that –*

NS: *what does it mean?*

NNS: *like um like American people they always go there every Sunday*

NS: *yes?*

- 10 Which country adopted Swahili as the national language?
- 11 In what specific way is a creole different from a pidgin?
- 12 What is a lexifier language?
- 13 What is the term used to describe the use of fewer creole forms and structures?
- 14 How would you translate these two examples from Tok Pisin?

katim gras

pen bilong maus

Tasks

A Users of Standard American English and Standard British English can usually understand each other, but there are some differences in vocabulary use. Can you put the following words in the appropriate spaces below?

bill, biscuit, bonnet, boot, candy, check, cookie, crisps, dummy, estate agent, flashlight, garbage, gas, hood, jumper, pacifier, pants, petrol, potato chips, realtor, rubbish, sneakers, sweater, sweets, torch, trainers, trousers, trunk

	American	British
Example: Would you like a chocolate _____ with your coffee?	<u>cookie</u>	<u>biscuit</u>
(1) He should wear a white shirt and dark _____.	_____	_____
(2) It's really dark outside, you'll need a _____.	_____	_____
(3) I bought some new _____ in order to go running.	_____	_____
(4) It's all _____, so just throw it all away.	_____	_____
(5) The small child had a _____ in its mouth.	_____	_____
(6) Eating a lot of _____ is bad for your teeth.	_____	_____
(7) (In a restaurant) Can we have the _____, please?	_____	_____
(8) Do you want some _____ with your sandwich?	_____	_____
(9) You'd better bring a _____ because it's quite chilly.	_____	_____
(10) What does a gallon of _____ cost these days?	_____	_____
(11) The _____ thinks the house will sell quickly.	_____	_____
(12) In most cars, the spare wheel is in the _____, and not under the _____.	_____	_____