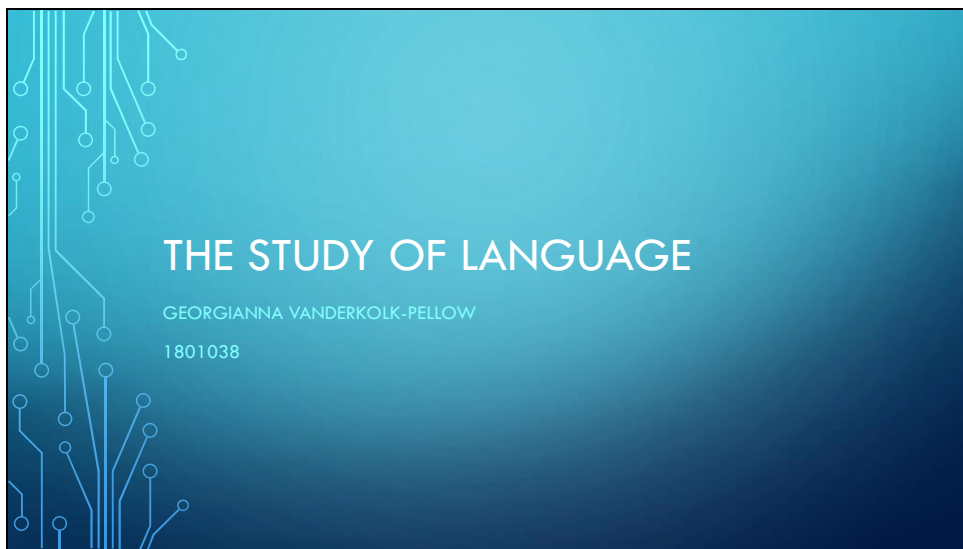


PRESENTATION

Slide 1



WHAT IS LANGUAGE?

Simply: A method of human communication.

A cognition that truly makes humans unique. Whereas other species do communicate with an innate ability to produce a limited number of meaningful vocalizations or even with partially learned systems (e.g. bird songs), there is no other species known to date that can express sentence) with a limited set of speech sounds and words other than humans.

Linguistic anthropology is the study of how language influences social life.



The worldwide definition of language is “The method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way”. The ability to speak a verbal language represents a defining feature of human beings. Different languages, with different grammars, divide or classify components of the world differently. But what about linguistic anthropology? As mentioned on the slide, linguistic anthropology is the study of how language influences social life. It explores how language shapes communication, forms social identity and group membership, organizes large-scale cultural beliefs and ideologies, and develops a common cultural representation of natural and social worlds.

LANGUAGE THEORIES



CHOMSKY:

- Completely disregarded Skinner's theory.
- Devised the Universal Grammar theory.
- Believed that Universal Grammar has to contain all the grammatical information needed to combine these categories, e.g. noun and verb, into phrases



SAUSSURE:

- Work is defined as "Semiotics" meaning Science of the signs.
- Claimed that "language resists change".
- Believed that language is a system of differences.
- Believed that language is symbolic and words are signs.



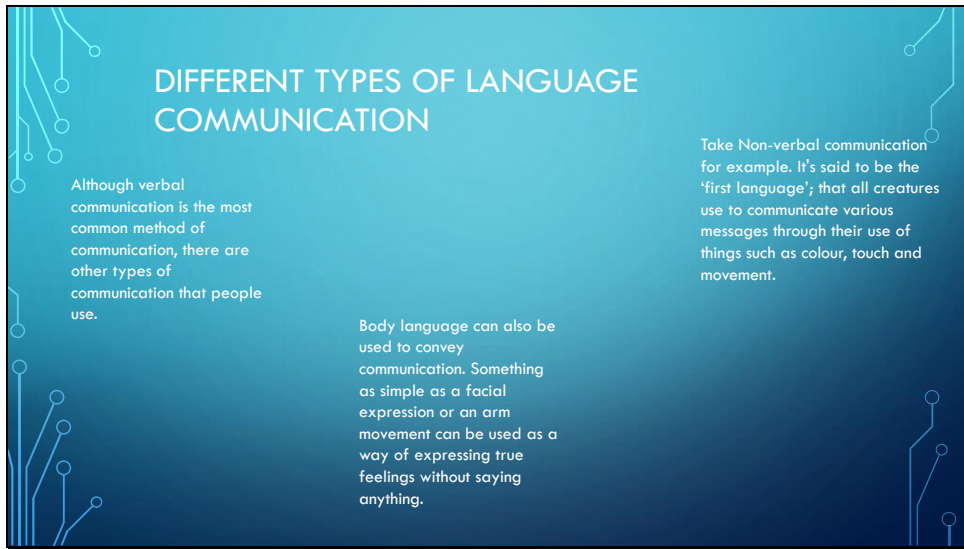
SKINNER:

- Accounted for language development by means of environmental influence.
- Argued that children learn language based on behaviorist reinforcement principles by associating words with meanings.
- For example, when a child says a word such as 'milk', their parent will give them some praise. As a result, the child will find this outcome rewarding, enhancing the child's language development

Many anthropologists and others have studied Language in detail and there are many theories surrounding it. For example, one of the earliest scientific explanations for language came from B.F. Skinner. Skinner was an American psychologist whose focus was the language development in children, and he believed that children learn language based on behaviourist reinforcement principles by associating words with meanings. He said that correct utterances are positively reinforced when the child realizes the communicative value of words and phrases and praise from parents is important in this development. However, Skinner's theory was heavily criticised by Noam Chomsky. Chomsky argued that children would never pick up the tools needed for creating an infinite number of sentences if "the language acquisition mechanism purely depended on language input alone. He came up with the theory of Universal Grammar, an idea of innate, grammatical categories such as noun and verb categories that covered the entire language development in children as well as the overall language development in adults. This theory was accepted for many years until American linguist Daniel Everett came along. He studied a small Amazonian tribe called the Piraha for many years and whilst looking at their language, discovered that they lack a fundamental feature of Chomsky's proposed universal grammar, something called recursion, (the feature in language that allows humans to put clauses together (For example, "The man / whose boat I saw / said / that he couldn't imagine / why anyone would try that"). Everett claimed that because of this notable absence, universal grammar couldn't exist. However, when he tried to put his theory across, he was shut down by linguists and banished from visiting the Piraha.

Ferdinand Saussure also looked at language in detail. He was a Swiss semiotician whose main study was language as the study of signs. He believed that linguistics is a part of semiology and that written language exists purely for the purpose of representing spoken language. He also argued that language is a structured system of arbitrary signs.

Slide 4



DIFFERENT TYPES OF LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION

Although verbal communication is the most common method of communication, there are other types of communication that people use.

Body language can also be used to convey communication. Something as simple as a facial expression or an arm movement can be used as a way of expressing true feelings without saying anything.

Take Non-verbal communication for example. It's said to be the 'first language'; that all creatures use to communicate various messages through their use of things such as colour, touch and movement.

Slide 5

EL SILBO: THE WHISTLING LANGUAGE IN LA GOMERA.

All communication is done via whistling.

Little is known of the original language before El Silbo or the languages of the Canaries, but it is assumed that their phonological system must have been simple enough to allow an efficient whistled language to come into usage.

In the 1980s Unesco added the whistle-language to the list of world heritage cultural assets.

Messages conveyed can range from event invitations to public information advisories.



The whistling language of El Silbo on the Spanish island of La Gomera (close to the Canary Islands) has fascinated linguists and language enthusiasts alike for many years. Originally invented in order to facilitate communication between the people of the island across the deep gorges and valleys long before mobile phones were invented, the tradition continues even now with the local government including it in the educational system of the island. The speakers even have their own way of shouting and this is the art of “Flying Messages”. Depending on the pitch and length of the sounds, consonants and vowels can be imitated, allowing villagers of long-distance villages to communicate with each other via flying messages. As mentioned on the slide, El Silbo is so unique that UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) added it to their list of World heritage cultural assets.

CASE STUDY: THE YORUBA TRIBE WHO ARE THEY?

They belong to the Niger-Congo language family, which covers many cultures of that region, including Benin.



There are 42 million Yoruba people, making them one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa.

The culture of the Yoruba are strongly based on folktales and philosophy.

Yoruba families are kinship-based, with each clan claiming a shared common ancestor.

Due to their genetics, the Yoruba has the highest rate of twins in the world.



For my case study, I have chosen to look at the Yoruba people. The Yoruba people are a Niger-Congo ethnic group who live in Southwestern and north-central Nigeria, as well as southern and central Benin and these regions are collectively known as Yorubaland. Overall, the Yoruba make up about 42 million people in total with many of them living in Nigeria, making them one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa. According to official history, the Yoruba region was invaded in the 19th century by another ethnic group, the Fulani, who pushed them south into the regions they occupy today. In the early 20th century, most Yoruba people fell under control of the British Empire, where they remained for about 60 years before Nigeria gained independence. However, according to Yoruba mythology, Yoruba people descended from a god-hero named Odua, sometimes spelled Oduduwa, who helped create the earth and was the first to live upon it. As mentioned on the slide, Yoruba culture is strongly based on folktales and philosophy and these are designed to help the people navigate through life sensibly. Yoruba society is kinship based, with each clan claiming a common ancestor, and Odua is seen as the ancient ancestor of all Yoruba clans. This ties in with the fact that most of Yoruba marriages are arranged. The man who is courting the bride must prove that he can make a payment to the family in the form of bride wealth. The elaborate wedding ceremony includes nine days where the bride spends time at both her new husband and parent's house.

Slide 7

YORUBA LANGUAGE

Yoruba has many dialects, but its speakers can all understand each other.

The same combination of vowels and consonants has different meanings depending on the pitch of the vowels (whether they are pronounced with a high voice or a low voice). For example, the word, 'aro', can mean cymbal, indigo dye, lamentation, and granary, depending on intonation.

Yoruba was an unwritten language until 1884 when a Yoruba speaker named Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther translated a Bible which resulted in the development of a standard written form of Yoruba that has been widely adopted across the dialect today.

Yoruba is a tonal language with three tones, high, mid and low.

The Yoruba alphabet

A a	B b	D d	E e	F f	G g	Gb gb	H h
gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb
I i	J j	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	P p
gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb
R r	S s	Sh sh	T t	U u	W w	Y y	
gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb
gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb	gb

Nasal vowels (Asoye Fawehinmi)

an	en	in	on	un
[ã]	[ẽ]	[ĩ]	[õ]	[ũ]

Yoruba is a language is a plucentric language spoken by 28 million people all over the world and it's one of the 4 official languages of Nigeria, along with English, Hausa, Igbo. Yoruba is a tonal language with three tones, low, mid and high. These tones are distinguished by accents, high is distinguished by an acute accent, mid is not marked and low is distinguished by a grave accent.

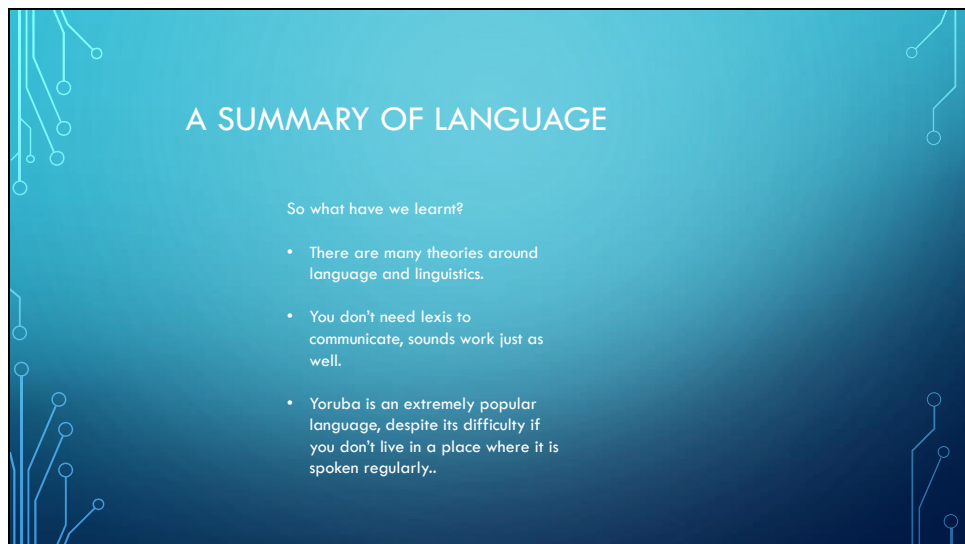
Literary Yoruba (also known as standard Yoruba) is a separate member of the dialect. It is the written language, the one taught in schools and the one spoken on the radio and on television. It's origins date back to the 1800's when (as mentioned on the slide), the first African Bishop, Samuel Crowther translated the Bible. One thing to note is Standard Yoruba has some strange features and these include the simplified vowel harmony system and foreign structures such as calques.

Yoruba is an isolating language with the basic sentence order being 'subject-verb-object'. There is no grammatical gender however there is a clear distinction between human and non-human nouns. There are two prepositions, 'ni' meaning on or in and 'si' meaning onto or towards and these are frequently used. Yoruba also has an extensive literature collection.

Slide 8



Slide 9



Slide 10



ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1) Ekman, P., & O'Sullivan, M. (1991). Who can catch a liar? *American Psychologist*, 46(9), 913-920.

In this study, American psychologist Paul Ekman and American professor Maureen O'Sullivan tried to prove how simple or difficult it is to detect lying. 509 people were interviewed including law-enforcement members, such as members of the US Secret Service, Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Security Agency, Drug Enforcement Agency, California police and judges, as well as psychiatrists, college students, and working adults. A videotape showed 10 people who were either lying or telling the truth in describing their feelings. Only the Secret Service performed better than chance, and they were significantly more accurate than all of the other groups. When the occupational group was disregarded, it was found that those who were accurate, apparently used different behavioural clues and had had different skills than those who were inaccurate.

2) Everett, D. (2018). *Why language is not everything that Noam Chomsky said it is*. [online] Aeon.

In this article, American linguist Daniel Everett talks about Noam Chomsky's language theory, his dispute against Chomsky's theory and the article he posted about that and Tom Wolfe, an American author who, in Everett's words, has been "pulled into the fray by the disagreements". Everett mentions how much disrupt his article has caused him and how, depending on which newspaper you ask, he is either an "irrelevant, mistaken charlatan" or an "instant folk hero". It's interesting to note how he mentions that his actual conclusion was not about recursion (as apparently Chomsky and many others believe) but the connection between culture and grammar. It's also interesting to note how he mentions that although he has respect for Chomsky, "Chomsky is not Einstein and linguistics is not physics" as if he's implying he thinks Chomsky is wrong.

Although this article gives a fair overview of the debate between Everett and Chomsky, because it's written from Everett's point of view, it is very biased and therefore, not completely reliable.

3) Everett, D. (2012). *The Grammar of Happiness*. [video] Available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL_aqOuM7-E

This documentary follows the story of American linguist Daniel Everett as he lives, discovers and becomes part of the extraordinary Amazonian Piraha tribe, a group of hunter- gatherers whose culture and outlook on life has taken the world by storm. As a young ambitious missionary three decades ago, Everett was sent to the Amazon to teach the Piraha about the Lord. His main task was to translate the book of Mark into the language of the Piraha, a language so unique, it's unlike and unrelated to any other. However, that task when Everett discovered that the Piraha had no interest in learning about the Lord, they were perfectly happy as they were. This discovery led Everett to question his own deep beliefs and he turned against religion. Due to this, his devout Christian wife divorced him and his children cut off all contact, feeling like he had betrayed them.

But Everett didn't change. In fact, he started studying the Piraha in more detail, looking at their linguistics and he discovered something extraordinary. Pirah language lacked 'recursion' - the ability to build an infinite number of sentences within sentences. If this discovery was entirely correct, it'd mean that Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar theory would be false. But people didn't want to listen to this discovery and Everett was banned from visiting the Piraha.

4) Mercer, P. (2008). Lost indigenous language revived in Australia. [online] BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20066624>

In this article from BBC News, the reporter is examining the revival of the Kurna language, a language spoken by the original inhabitants of Adelaide, Australia before it started to die out in the 1860's. The article mentions how the last fluent Kurna speaker died in the 1920s but now, 80 years later, it's being brought back to life, thanks to the extensive work of researchers (the research is described as "a painstaking piece of detective work"). There is also examples of lexis in the language, for example "Purrunarninthi" means "Coming Alive" and "Niinamarnitidli" means "Having a good day?"

Although this article is from the BBC so reliability is strong, it is from 2008 and there is no update on whether Kurna is still alive today, 10 years later.

5) Morris, D. (1994). *The Human Animal: Language in The Body*. [video] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qUKiHZbVwc&feature=youtu.be>

In this episode of The Human Animal, English zoologist Desmond Morris travels the world, filming the diverse customs and habits that people have when it comes to body language. He mentions how one gesture means three different things in three different countries and how the simple nod and shake of the head meaning yes or no can be interpreted differently (For example, in India, people wobble their heads to mean yes). Morris examines how humans communicated before the evolution of language and looks at how a simple movement can give away a lot. At one point, he says "Most regional body language has a long and complicated history, with the origins often forgotten. One of the special qualities of regional gestures is that they're amazingly conservative — they remain confined to their own particular area, regardless of the fact that all around them national boundaries keep changing. As a result of this, within a particular country today, you can find what we call a 'gesture frontier' — a place where one gesture stops and another one begins." and I think this is important to remember today, even though it might look like a certain gesture is universal, it actually is not.

GLOSSARY

1. **Semiotician:** A person who studies signs and symbols as elements of communicative behaviour and who studies the general theory of signs and symbolism and the branches it's usually divided into; pragmatics, semantics and syntactics.
2. **Arbitrary:** Derived from Arbitrariness, arbitrary is the quality of being determined by chance, whim, or impulse, and not by reason, or principle. Arbitrary decisions are not the same as random decisions.
3. **Kinesics:** The part of non-verbal communication consisting of gestures, expressions, and postures.
4. **Recursion:** This occurs when a thing is defined in terms of itself or of its type. It's used in a variety of contexts ranging from linguistics to logic.
5. **Dialect:** A form of a language which is particular to a specific region or social group.
6. **Linguistics:** The scientific study of language and its structure, including the study of grammar, syntax, and phonetics.
7. **Lexis:** All the words in a language.
8. **Universal Grammar:** A theory devised by American linguist Noam Chomsky that he claimed is the "theoretical or hypothetical system of categories, operations, and principles shared by all human languages and considered to be innate". It is connected to children and their ability to learn their native language.

9. **Emic:** Field research that is done and viewpoints that are obtained from within the social group (from the perspective of a person inside the group).
10. **Etic:** Field research that is done and viewpoints that are obtained from outside the social group (from the perspective of an observer).