



**LANGUAGE  
DEVELOPMENT**  
AN INTRODUCTION

NINTH EDITION

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ROBERT E. OWENS, JR.

NINTH EDITION

# *Language Development*

## *An Introduction*

Robert E. Owens, Jr.

College of Saint Rose

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*"Say that again. I didn't hear you. I was listening to my toast."*

Jessica Owens, age 4

*To my gran'kids, Cassidy, Dakota, and Zavier.*

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# Preface

There is no single way in which children learn to communicate. Each child follows an individual developmental pattern just as you did. Still, it is possible to describe a pattern of general communication development and of English specifically. This text attempts such descriptions and generalizations but emphasizes individual patterns, too.

## New to This Edition

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For those readers familiar with older editions, you'll find much has changed and, hopefully, much that you'll like. The changes in the ninth edition of *Language Development: An Introduction* are as follows:

- Continued distribution of bilingual and dialectal development throughout the text rather than in a separate stand-alone chapter. It seemed time to bring these speakers in out of the cold and put them where they belong in recognition of their importance and also the increase in bilingualism in the United States.
- Expanded discussion of children from lower-SES families, including those living in homeless shelters.
- Chapter 4, which carries the burden of explaining cognition and its relationship to speech and language, has been substantially reorganized to aid learning.
- Consolidated information on Theory of Mind in one chapter, as some professors recommended, so the discussion is more coherent.
- Improved readability throughout with more thorough explanations and clarification/simplification of terms, and increased use of headings and bulleted points.
- Weeded out redundancies and asides to make the text less dense.
- Provided more child language examples throughout to better illustrate language structures.
- And, of course, updated research. I spent over eight months just reading before I ever began to edit. For those compulsive types who count number of bibliographic entries, you'll find several hundred new references along with several retirements.

Phew! That list even makes me tired. My hope is that you'll also find the new edition very useful.

Those of you who will one day become parents should appreciate the value of this text as a guideline to development. If you plan to work with children with disabilities and without, you'll find that typical development can provide a model for evaluation and intervention. The developmental rationale can be used to decide on targets for training and to determine the overall remediation approach.

In recognition of the importance of the developmental rationale as a tool and of the changing perspectives in child language development, the ninth edition offers

expanded coverage of preschool and school-age language development. Pragmatics receives increased attention, as does the conversational context within which most language development occurs. If you're a prospective speech-language pathologist, you will find these developmental progressions valuable when making decisions concerning materials to use with children who have speech and language impairments. As consumers of educational and therapeutic products, you must be especially sensitive to the philosophy that governs the organization of such materials. Many materials claim to be developmental in design but are not. I recall opening one such book to find *please* and *thank you* as the first two utterances to be taught to a child with deafness. These words violate many of the characteristics of first words.

Experienced teachers, psychologists, or speech-language pathologists need not rely on such prepackaged materials if they have a good base in communication development. An understanding of the developmental process and the use of a problem-solving approach can be a powerful combination in the hands of creative clinicians.

## Acknowledgments

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A volume of this scope must be the combined effort of many people fulfilling many roles, and this one is no exception.

My first thanks go to all those professionals and students, too numerous to mention, who have corresponded or conversed with me and offered criticism or suggestions for this edition. The overall organization of this text reflects the general organization of my own communication development course and that of professionals with whom I have been in contact.

The professional assistance of several people has been a godsend. The College of Saint Rose is an environment that encourages collaboration and individual professional growth, and it's a wonderful place to work. This attitude is reflected in the policies and practices of Dean of Education Margaret McLane and my department chair, James Feeney. Other great faculty members include, in alphabetical order, Dave DeBonis, Colleen Karow, Jessica Kisenwether, Megan Overby (now at DeQuesne University), Jack Pickering, Anne Rowley, and Julia Unger, and fellow clinical faculty members Director of Clinical Education Jackie Klein, Marisa Bryant, Sarah Coons, Colleen Fluman, Elaine Galbraith, Julie Hart, Barbara Hoffman, Kate Lansing, Jessica Laurenzo, Melissa Spring, and Lynn Stephens. You have all made me feel welcome and valued.

Others included in my list are

- Dr. Addie Haas, retired professor in the Communication Disorders Department at State University of New York at New Paltz, is a dear friend; a trusted confidant; a good buddy; a fellow hiker; a skilled clinician; a source of information, ideas, and inspiration; my go-to person to bounce ideas around; and a helluva lot of fun. I will never forget our adventures "Down under."
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I would also like to express my love and appreciation to my children, Jason, Todd, and Jessica, who are as beautiful as adults as they were as youngsters; to my gran'kids, Cassidy, Dakota, and Zavier, whose language is sprinkled throughout this book; and to my colleague at O and M Education, Moon Byungchoon.

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Robert E. Owens, Jr.



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# 1

## The Territory

### OBJECTIVES

**B**efore we can discuss language development, we need to agree on what language is and what it is not. Don't worry; as a user of language, you already know a great deal about it. This chapter will organize your knowledge and provide some labels for the many aspects of language you know. Don't panic—introductory chapters usually contain a lot of terminology so that we can all “speak the same language” throughout the text. When you have completed this chapter, you should understand the following:

- Differences among speech, language, and communication
- Differences among nonlinguistic, paralinguistic, and metalinguistic aspects of communication
- Main properties of language
- Five components of language and their descriptions
- What a dialect is and its relation to its parent language

- Major factors that cause dialects to develop

- Important terms:

antonym	phoneme
bilingual	phonology
bound morpheme	pragmatics
code switch	register
communication	selection restrictions
communicative competence	semantic features
deficit approach	semantics
dialects	sociolinguistic approach
discourse	speech
free morpheme	suprasegmental devices
language	style shifting
linguistic competence	synonym
linguistic performance	syntax
morpheme	vernacular
morphology	word knowledge
nonlinguistic cues	world knowledge
paralinguistic codes	



Language and its processing in your brain are so complex that specialists devote their lives to investigating them. These specialists, called *linguists*, try to determine the ways in which we use language to communicate. The linguist deduces rules and patterns demonstrated when we, as users of a language, communicate with one another. In a sense, each child is a linguist who must deduce the rules of his or her native language.


You're already a mature language user but let's imagine that you encounter human language for the first time. Even if you had the most sophisticated computer-based code-breaking software, it would be impossible to figure out the many ways in which humans use language. For that task, you would need to decipher each of the 6,000 human languages and gain extensive knowledge of human interactions, emotions, and cultures. In other words, language is more than the sum of these parts. To understand language, we must consider it in the natural contexts in which it occurs.

Language is the premier achievement of humans, and using it is something that all of us can do. For example, the average adult English speaker produces about 150 words per minute, selecting each from between 30,000 and 60,000 alternatives stored in the user's brain, choosing from a myriad of English language grammatical structures, and making less than 0.1% errors! That's impressive!

This becomes all the more amazing when you realize that the typical 4-year-old child has deciphered much of American English and already has well-developed speech, language, and communication skills. Truly remarkable given the complexity of the task!

You probably don't recall much about your own language acquisition. One statement is probably true: Unless you experienced difficulty, there was no formal instruction. Congratulations, you did most of it on your own. Now, we're going to attempt something almost as momentous . . . trying to explain it all!

To appreciate the task involved in language learning, you need to be familiar with some of the terminology that is commonly used in the field. All the terms introduced in this chapter and throughout the text are summarized for you in the Glossary. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an explanation of these terms. First, we discuss this text in general. Then we distinguish three often confused terms—*speech*, *language*, and *communication*—and look at some special qualities of language itself. Finally, we'll examine dialects.

 It's important to understand the significance of language for humans. Watch the first 2:08 minutes of this video for an interesting introduction. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZatrVND0iE>

## This Text and You

Although the full title of this text is *Language Development: An Introduction*, it is not a watered-down or cursory treatment of the topic. I have attempted to cover every timely, relevant, and important aspect of language development that might be of interest to the future speech-language pathologist, educator, psychologist, child development specialist, or parent. Of necessity, the material is complex and specific.

No doubt you've at least thumbed through this book. It may look overwhelming. It's not. I tell my own students that things are never as bleak as they seem at the beginning of the semester. Within the last 36 years, I have taken more than 5,000 of my own students through this same material with a nearly 100% success rate. Let me try to help you find this material as rewarding to learn as it is to teach.

First, the text is organized into two sections. The first few chapters provide a background that includes terms, theories, and information on the brain and language. I know it's difficult to have to read this material when you really want to get to the development part, but believe me, all this background is necessary. The main topics of development are contained in the remaining chapters, which are organized sequentially from newborns through adults. Yes, adults are still learning language and adapting to changes.

As with any text, there are a few simple rules that can make the learning experience more fruitful.

- Note the chapter objectives prior to reading the chapter and be alert for this information as you read. That's the key information.
- Read each chapter in small doses then let it sink in for a while. The worst thing to do is put it off until the night before the test.
- Find the chapter organization described at the end of each chapter's introduction. This will help you know where we're going and follow me through the material.
- Take brief notes as you read. Don't try to write everything down. Stop at natural divisions in the content and ask yourself what was most important. Periodic summarizing is a great learning strategy.
- Review your notes when you stop reading and before you begin again the next time. This process will provide a review and some continuity.
- Try to read a little every day or every other day. That's a good long-term learning strategy. I say long-term because if you are a speech-language pathology student, you'll be seeing a lot more about language in your studies.
- Note the key terms in the chapter objectives and try to define them as you read. Each one is printed in boldface in the body of the chapter. Please don't just thumb through or turn to the Glossary for a dictionary definition. The terms are relatively meaningless out of context. They need the structure of the other information. Context is very important.
- Try to answer the questions throughout each chapter. They'll help you think more deeply about the material.
- I have tried to de-emphasize linguists, authors, and researchers by placing all citations in parentheses. Unless your professor calls your attention to a specific person, she or he may not wish to emphasize these individuals either. It may be a waste of time to try to remember who said what about language development. "He said-she said" memorization can be very tedious. The exceptions, of course, are individuals mentioned specifically by name in lecture and in the text.
- Make ample use of the weblinks and videos to enhance your reading. Additional information is always good.

I hope that these suggestions will help, although none is a guarantee.

Roll up your sleeves, set aside adequate time, and be prepared to be challenged. Actually, your task is relatively simple when compared to the toddler faced with deciphering the language she or he hears.

## Speech, Language, and Communication

---

Child development professionals study the changes that occur in *speech*, *language*, and *communication* as children grow and develop. You might interpret these terms as having similar meanings or as being identical. Actually, they're very different and denote different aspects of development and use.

### SPEECH

**Speech** is a verbal means of communicating. Other ways of communicating include but are not limited to writing, drawing, and manual signing. The result of planning and executing specific motor sequences, speech is a process that requires very precise

neuromuscular coordination. Each spoken language has specific sounds or **phonemes**, plus sound combinations that are characteristic of that language. In addition, speech involves other components, such as voice quality, intonation, and rate. These components enhance the meaning of the message. For example, we talk faster when excited.

A highly complicated acoustic or sound event, speech is unlike any other environmental noise. Not even music achieves the level of complexity found in speech. Take a simple word such as *toe* and say it very, very slowly. The initial sound is an almost inhuman “tsch.” This is followed by “o . . . w” in which your rounded mouth gradually tightens. Now say *toe* at normal speed and note how effortlessly this is done. Say it again and note how your brain integrates the signal as it comes in, creating the unified *toe*. You are a truly amazing being!

Speech is not the only means of face-to-face human communication. We also use gestures, facial expressions, and body posture to send messages. In face-to-face conversation, nonspeech means may carry up to 60% of the information exchanged.

Although humans are not the only animals that make sounds, to my knowledge, no other species can match the variety and complexity of human speech sounds. These qualities are the result of the unique structures of the human vocal tract, a mechanism that is functional months before the first words are spoken. Infants spend much of their first year experimenting with their vocal mechanisms and producing a variety of sounds. Gradually, these sounds come to reflect the language of the child’s environment.

## LANGUAGE

Individual speech sounds are meaningless noises until some regularity is added. The relationship between individual sounds, meaningful sound units, and the combination of these units is specified by the rules of a language. **Language** can be defined as a socially shared code or conventional system for representing concepts through the use of arbitrary symbols and rule-governed combinations of those symbols. In other words, the symbols or words are arbitrary but speakers know the meanings of these symbols, which are, in turn, organized in certain ways to convey ideas.

English is a language, as is Spanish or Navajo. Each has its own unique symbols and rules for symbol combinations. Languages are not monolithic. They contain **dialects**, subcategories of the parent language that use similar but not identical rules. All users of a language follow certain dialectal rules that differ from an idealized standard. For example, I sometimes find myself reverting to former dialectal usage in saying “*acros**t** the street*” and “open your *umbrella*.”

Languages change and evolve. Interactions between languages naturally occur in **bilingual** communities. Under certain circumstances, language mixing may result in a new form of both languages being used in that community (Backus, 1999). When I was a child, we said “tidal wave”; now we say “tsunami.”

Languages that don’t evolve, grow, and change become obsolete. Sometimes, for reasons other than linguistic ones, languages either flourish or wither. At present, for example, fewer than 80 individuals fluently speak Seneca, a western New York Native American language. The death of languages is not a rare event in the modern world. Languages face extinction as surely as plants and animals. When Kuzakura, an aged woman, died in western Brazil in 1988, the Umutina language died with her. It is estimated that as many as half the world’s 6,000 languages are no longer learned by children. These languages will die. Many others are endangered. Most of these have less than a few thousand users. Only strong cultural and religious ties keep languages such as Yiddish and Pennsylvania Dutch viable. How long they will be secure is anyone’s guess.

This century may see the eradication of most remaining languages. Sadly, it is doubtful that many of the 270 aboriginal languages of Australia—possibly some of the earth’s oldest languages—will survive. The one that gave us the name for the cuddly-looking

koala is already gone. Of the 154 Native American languages now in use, nearly 120 are each spoken by less than a thousand individuals. Other endangered languages include OroWin, an Amazonian language with only three surviving speakers; Gullah, spoken by the descendents of African slaves on islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia; and Nushu, a southern Chinese language spoken only by women. The worldwide loss of languages is the result of government policy, dwindling indigenous populations, the movements of populations to cities, mass media, and lack of education of the young. The Internet is also a culprit in the demise of some languages. The need to converse in one language is fostering increasing use of English.

Each language is a unique vehicle for thought. For example, in many Native American languages, the Great Spirit is not a noun as in European languages but a *verb*. This concept of a supreme being is totally different from that of Europeans. As a speaker of English, can you even imagine *god* as a verb? It changes the whole concept of a supreme being.

In the rain forest of northwestern Brazil, a language called Pirahã is so unique that it almost defies accepted notions of language. Spoken by approximately 350 people and reflecting their culture, Pirahã consists of only eight consonants and three vowels. Yet it has such a complex array of tones, stresses, and syllable lengths that speakers dispense with their sounds altogether and hum, sing, or whistle using relatively simple grammar by linguistic standards. Instead, meaning of words and phrases depends on changes in pitch and tone.

When we lose a language, we lose an essential part of the human fabric with its own unique perspective. A culture and possibly thousands of years of communication die with that language, the study of which might have unlocked secrets about universal language features, the origins of language, or the nature of thought. Within oral-only languages, the very nature of language itself is different. Words that have been passed on for generations acquire a sacredness, and speech is somehow connected to the Divine.

The death of a language is more than an intellectual or academic curiosity. After a week's immersion in Seneca, Mohawk, Onondaga, and other Iroquois languages, one man concluded:

These languages are the music that breathes life into our dances, the overflowing vessels that hold our culture and traditions. And most important, these languages are the conduits that carry our prayers to the Creator. . . . Our languages are central to who we are as a native people.

“Come visit sometime,” he offers. “I will bid you ‘oolihelisi’ ” (Coulson, 1999, p. 8A).

English is a Germanic variation of a much larger family of Indo-European languages as varied as Italian, Greek, Russian, Hindi, Urdu, Persian, and ancient Sanskrit. Although the Indo-European family is the largest family, as many as 30 others may exist, many much smaller.

Languages can grow as their respective cultures change. English has proven particularly adaptive, changing slowly through the addition of new words. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, approximately 8,000 English words predate the 12th century, including *laugh* and *friend*.

Already the language with the largest number of words—approximately 700,000—English adds an estimated half dozen words per day. While many of these are scientific terms, they also include words popular on college campuses, such as *selfie* (smartphone self-photo), *cholo* (macho), and *dis* (scorn). English dictionaries have just recently added *24/7*, *bubba*, *blog*, *headbanger*, *gaydar*, *pumped (up)*, *megaplex*, *racial profiling*, *slamming*, *brownfield*, *piercing*, *homeschool*, *netiquette*, and *sexting*. Some words have new meaning. For example, previously only Moses had *tablets*, now everybody does. These words tell us much about our modern world.



What is language and what is not? Watch minutes 4:05–11:50 in this video as Dr. Steven Pinker of Harvard University answers this question. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-B\\_ONJIEcE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-B_ONJIEcE)

Although most languages can be transmitted by speech, speech is not an essential feature of language. To some extent, the means of transmission influences processing and learning, although the underlying concepts of signing are similar to spoken languages (Emmorey, 1993; Lillo-Martin, 1991).

American Sign Language is not a mirror of American English but is a separate language with its own rules for symbol combinations. As in spoken languages, individually signed units are combined following linguistic rules. Approximately 50 sign languages are used worldwide, including one of the world's newest languages, Nicaraguan Sign Language, invented by children with deafness to fill a void in their education. On the other side of the earth in Al-sayyid, a Bedouin village in the Negev desert of Israel, another sign language has arisen without the influence of any other spoken or signed languages. Within this village approximately 150 individuals are deaf and use their language to communicate with each other and with hearing members of the community (Boswell, 2006).

Following is the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association definition of *language* (Committee on Language, 1983). The result of a committee decision, this definition has a little of everything, but it also is very thorough.

- Language is a complex and dynamic system of conventional symbols that is used in various modes for thought and communication.
- Language evolves within specific historical, social, and cultural contexts.
- Language, as rule-governed behavior, is described by at least five parameters—phonologic, morphologic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic.
- Language learning and use are determined by the intervention of biological, cognitive, psychosocial, and environmental factors.
- Effective use of language for communication requires a broad understanding of human interaction including such associated factors as nonverbal cues, motivation, and sociocultural roles.

Languages exist because users have agreed on the symbols to be used and the rules to be followed. This agreement is demonstrated through language usage. Thus, languages exist by virtue of social convention or use. Just as users agree to follow the rules of a language



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**H**umans use language to communicate through a number of means, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

system, they can agree to change the rules. For example, the *eth* found as an ending on English verbs (*asketh*) in the King James Version of the Bible has disappeared from use. New words can be added to a language; others fall into disuse. Words such as *DVD* and *blog* were uncommon just a few years ago. Users of one language can borrow words from another. For instance, despite the best efforts of the French government, its citizens seem to prefer the English word *jet* to the more difficult, though lyrical, *avion de reaction*.

English also has borrowed heavily from other languages, while they have felt free to borrow in return. Here are a few English words taken from other languages:

- *Raccoon* (Powhatan, a Native American language)
- *Jaguar* (Tupi-Guarani languages of the Amazon)
- *Immediate* (French)
- *Democracy* (Greek)
- *Tycoon* (Japanese)
- *Sofa* (Arabic)
- *Piano* (Italian)

In the process, meanings and words are changed slightly to conform to linguistic and cultural differences. More recently, English has incorporated words such as *tsunami* (Japanese), *barrio* (Spanish), *jihad* (Arabic), *sushi* (Japanese), and *schlep* (Yiddish).

Even strong, vibrant, firmly entrenched languages struggle against the embrace of the Internet and its accompanying English. Formal Spanish has given way to Cyber-Spanish with words such as *escapar* (escape) instead of *salir* and *un emilio* or *imail* (an e-mail) instead of *un correo electronico*.

English has become the language of worldwide commerce and the Internet. Possibly a billion people speak English as a second language, most in Asia. As they learn English, these speakers are making it their own, modifying it slightly with the addition of words from their languages and incorporating their own intonational and structural patterns. In the near future, it may be more appropriate to think of English as a family of similar languages.

Braj Kachru, a professor in India, questions the very idea that English is inevitably linked to Western culture. He hypothesizes that English can be as adaptable to local culture as a musical instrument is to music. More succinctly put, English no longer belongs to the English. According to Professor Kachru (2005), the over 500 million Asian speakers of English should direct the language's course because the number of speakers in traditionally English-speaking countries is declining. The "Englishes" of the future may be hybrids or even new languages that may not be mutually understood by users from different cultures.

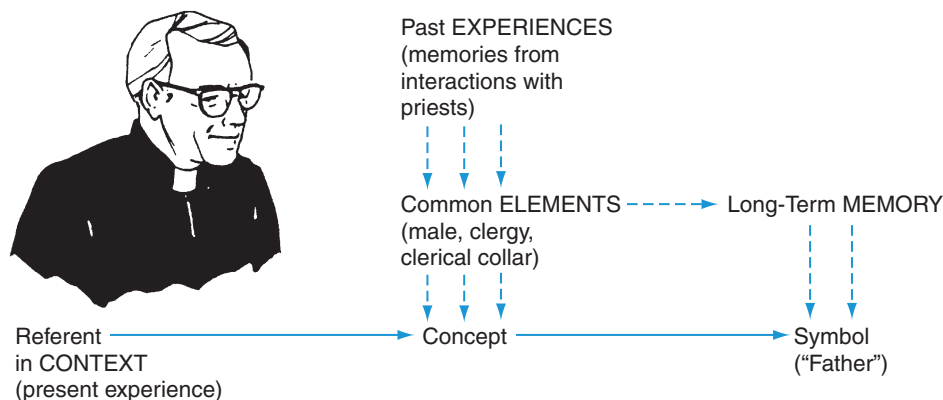
The socially shared code of English or any language allows the listener and speaker or writer and reader of the same language to exchange information. Internally, each uses the same code. The shared code is a device that enables each to represent an object, event, or relationship. Let's see how this is done.

Close your eyes for a few seconds and concentrate on the word *ocean*. While your eyes were closed, you may have had a visual image of surf and sand. The concept was transmitted to you and decoded automatically. In a conversation, listener and speaker switch from encoding to decoding and back again without difficulty. Words, such as *ocean*, represent concepts stored in our brains.

Each user encodes and decodes according to his or her shared concept of a given object, event, or relationship; the actual object, event, or relationship does not need to be present. Let's assume that you encounter a priest. From past experience, you recognize his social role. Common elements of these experiences are *Catholic*, *male*, and *clergy*. As you pass, you draw on the appropriate symbol and encode, "Morning, Father." This representational process is presented in Figure 1.1. The word may also suggest a very different meaning, depending on the experiences of each party. Let's assume for a moment

## FIGURE 1.1 Symbol–Referent Relationship

The concept is formed from the common elements of past experiences. The common elements of these experiences form the core of the concept. When a referent is experienced, it is interpreted in terms of the concept and the appropriate symbol applied.



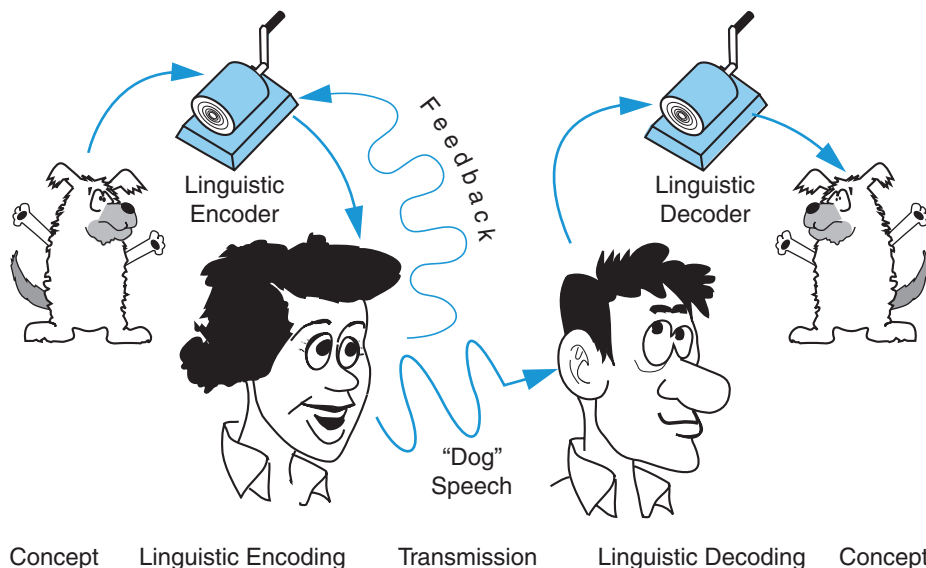
that your biological father is an Episcopal minister. You see him on the street in clerical garb and say, “Good morning, Father.” A passerby, unaware of your relationship, will assume something very different from the meaning that you and your father share. Coding is a factor of the speaker’s and listener’s shared meanings, the linguistic skills of each, and the context in which the exchange takes place.

Individual linguistic units communicate little in isolation. Most of the meaning or information is contained in the way symbols are combined. For example, “Teacher Jim a is” seems a meaningless jumble of words. By shifting a few words, however, we can create “Jim is a teacher.” Another modification could produce “Is Jim a teacher?”—a very different sentence. Language rules specify a system of relationships among the parts. The rules for these relationships give language order and allow users to predict which units or symbols will be used. In addition, the rules permit language to be used creatively. Symbols and rules governing their use help us to create utterances.

Language should not be seen merely as a set of static rules. It is a process of use and modification within the context of communication. Language is a tool for social use.

## COMMUNICATION

Both speech and language are parts of a larger process called communication. **Communication** is the exchange of information and ideas, needs and desires, between two or more individuals. The process is an active one that involves encoding, transmitting, and decoding the intended message. Figure 1.2 illustrates this process. It requires a sender and a receiver, and each must be alert to the informational needs of the other to ensure that messages are conveyed effectively and that intended meanings are preserved. For example, a speaker must identify a specific female, such as “Have you seen Catalina?” prior to using the pronoun *she*, as in “She was supposed to meet me.” The probability of message distortion is very high, given the number of ways a message can be formed and the past experiences and perceptions of each participant. The degree to which a speaker is successful in communicating, measured by the appropriateness and effectiveness of the message, is called **communicative competence**. The competent communicator is

**FIGURE 1.2** Process of Communication

able to conceive, formulate, modulate, and issue messages and to perceive the degree to which intended meanings are successfully conveyed.

Human communication is a complex, systematic, collaborative, context-bound tool for social action. Complexity can be demonstrated by the multifaceted and multifunctional aspects of the process. These include all aspects of communication and language plus additional mental processes, such as memory and planning, exercised within the cultural beliefs, situational variables, and social conventions of the individual participants. Although complex, communication is a systematic pattern of behavior.

Conversations don't consist of disconnected, independent utterances. Instead, communication is collaborative. Partners actively coordinate construction of a joint dialogue as they negotiate to understand each other's meanings.

This process occurs within a specific cultural context that influences interpretation of linguistic units and speaker behaviors. The context is variable, changing minute by minute as the physical setting, partners, and topics change. I once introduced myself to a young Korean boy as *Bob*, unaware that *bob* means *rice* in Korean and that being someone's rice is an idiom for being his servant. Imagine how thrilled — and misinformed — he was when I, his supposed servant, subsequently hoisted him upon my shoulders as his mother and I headed down the street.

Finally, communication is a tool for social action. We accomplish things as we communicate. Let's eavesdrop on a conversation:

SPEAKER 1: Are you busy?

SPEAKER 2: No, not really.

SPEAKER 1: Well, if you could, please take a look at my lesson plan.

SPEAKER 2: Okay.

Speaker 1 used politeness to accomplish his goals. By prefacing his request with a question, he invited speaker 2 to respond in a positive way. That's why gran'ma told you that you could catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.