

LANGUAGE



What is language?

Language is different from **speech**.

Language is used to **communicate**. This means sharing thoughts, feelings, messages and information with other people. It is the ability to understand words and to use them to make sentences

Language rules

There are rules which control how words can be built and used:

1. Morphology

Morphology is about the rules that control the structure of words. For example, the unit *re-* can be added to the words *try*, *play* and *take* to make *retry*, *replay* and *retake*. But *re-* cannot be added to *table*, *under* or *happy* because *retable*, *reunder* and *rehappy* are not proper words.

2. Syntax

Syntax is about the rules that control the order in which words can be joined to other words. For example, I can say *happy day*, as in “I’ve had a happy day.” But not *day happy*, as in “I’ve had a day happy.”

Getting these rules muddled can change the meaning of what we want to say. For example, a *Venetian blind* is not the same as a *blind Venetian*.

3. Semantics

Semantics is about the meaning of words. Words can mean different things in different situations. For example, “It’s hot!” could mean something like *it’s fantastic/cool/trendy/popular* in one situation. Or it could mean *be careful – it might burn you* in another situation.

4. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is about the way we use language differently in different situations. For example, we would probably talk differently to a teacher in the classroom and a child in the playground. It also means following social rules for talking to each other. For example, we should not interrupt others all the time when they are talking.

Comprehension and expression

All of the rules apply to how we understand language (**comprehension**) and how we use language to express ourselves (**expression**).

Is language called anything else?

- verbal communication
- expressive language/production (these are used instead of *expression*)
- receptive language/reception (these are used instead of *comprehension*)
- talk (but this is confusing because *talk* usually means both language and speech)

Using language successfully

To use language successfully, we must understand spoken language. We must also be able to express ourselves by speaking.

Reading and writing is also an important skill. Language is needed to read and write. So, we must understand written language (for example, emails, books and text messages). We must also be able to express ourselves in writing.