Charactersitics of Language

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Introduction to General Linguistics

Questions from Last Week

- Can you tell me your name without moving your mouth and hands?
  - That's why we need language.
- WHAT is language?
- Under what conditions would the ability to communicate **less important** to you than your eyes, mouth and hands?
- In what situations might your ability to communicate be **more important** to you than your eyes, mouth and hands?

Characteristics of Language
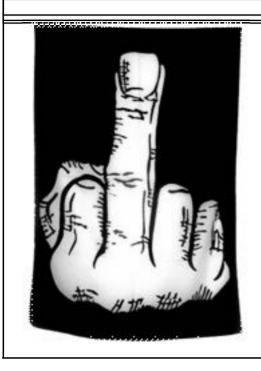
Language is a **system**

- Language comprises **well arranged** elements.
- Language is **well patterned**.
- Language has **such subsystems** as phonology, grammar, lexis.

L is a system of **sounds**.

• Main element of language is **sound.**
• People can speak before they can write

L is a system of symbols.
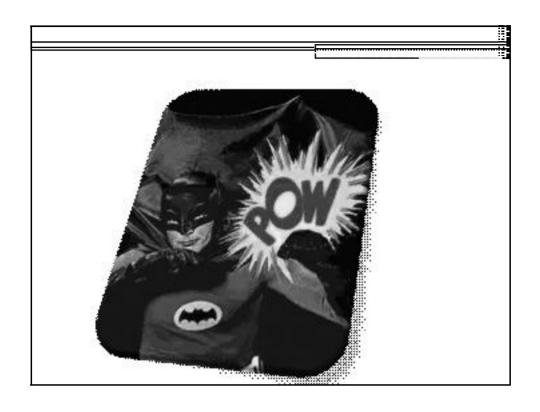
•Symbol represents something
• Symbol or Sign?
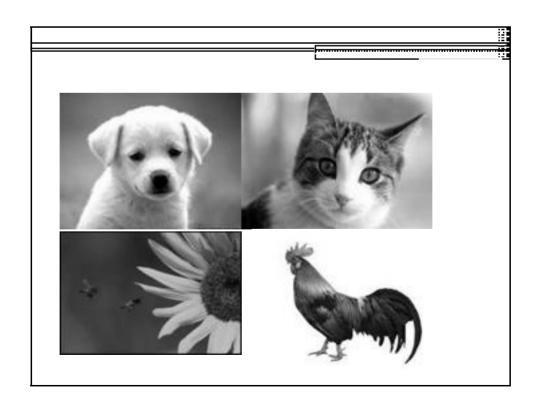
Sign or Symbol?

Language is arbitrary.

- Used based on agreement
- No obligatory relation between the symbol and the concept (or meaning)
- **Exception**: Onomatopoeia

An **onomatopoeic** word
is one that **sounds like**
the thing it is describing.

More examples:

- *The car screeched to a stop.*
- *Knock-knock, who's there?*
- *Click the right button.*
- *I don't like drivers honking all the time.*

Language is productive

- With limited elements, language can be used by lots of speakers.

✓How many Indonesian words can you make with "m", "a", "r", and "i"?
✓How many alphabets does Indonesian have?
✓How many sentences can you make with those alphabets?

Language is **unique**

- Each language has typical system that is not available in any other language.

> What language do you think these words belong to?:
> ✓ **mBandung**
> ✓ **mBogor**
> ✓ **ngGopek**
> ✓ **NgGunung**
> ✓ **nDepok**
> ✓ **nDekor**

Language is **universal**

- Language has a system that is **also applicable** in any other language.
- All languages have vocal symbols consisting **vocals, consonants, or diphthongs**.
- All languages have meaningful units: **phoneme, morpheme, words,** etc.
- Indonesian have many similar systems as Malay.

Language has **variations**

- No uniformity can exist in language.

Other characteristics of Language

- Language can be a self-identity.
- Language is functional.

That's all for today.
Questions?