

## Development of Language

- Anthropologists believe that language evolved when humans gathered in larger social units.
- Language allowed divisions of labour, development of social customs, and the ability to pass down knowledge and customs.
- **Whole Object Constraint:** think new word means the whole object and not its parts or qualities
  - Example: assume that 'goobar' means green bug, rather than just green or bug.
- **Language Explosion:** around 2 years of age, children start to learn new words incredibly fast.
- **Overextension:** Using a new word or naming system in too broad of a way.
  - Example: a child saying a 'car' is everything that has wheels, including bicycles.
- **Underextension:** Not using new words in a broad enough sense.
  - Example: a child saying a 'car' only refers to one specific car rather than all cars.
- **Pragmatics:** Using background knowledge and context cues to construct meaning.
  - The spy sees the police officer with the gun.
  - The spy sees the police officer with the binoculars.
  - If both these sentences are grammatically the same, why do we interpret them in two different ways? We have used context cues to infer meaning.
- Humans are inborn with the ability to acquire any of the thousands of languages in the world.
  - Evidence:
    - Infants can master language without formal instruction.
    - 1-3 months of age, infants vocalize the entire range of sounds found in the world's languages.
    - Sensitive period to language (example: Genie).
- Social learning plays a key role in language acquisition.
  - Example: motherese
- Debate amongst cognitive vs. behaviourists about how important social learning is
  - Behaviourists: Parents reinforce appropriate language
  - Cognitive: Children learn too much too fast