

CHARLES HOCKETT: DESIGN FEATURES OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

FEATURE:	Explanation:
Vocal-auditory channel	Communicator speaks; receiving individual hears.
Broadcast transmission; directional reception	Message goes out in all directions; receiver can tell what direction message comes from. (Sign language uses line-of-sight transmission instead.)
Rapid fading	Message is transitory and does not persist.
Interchangeability	Transmitters can become receivers, and vice versa; we can each repeat any message.
Total feedback	We hear all that we say.
Specialization	We communicate just for the purpose of communicating (not incidentally to some other primary function). Direct energy consequences are unimportant.
Semanticity	Symbols used (phonemes, morphemes) have particular meanings.
Arbitrariness	Symbols are arbitrary: the word "loud" can be spoken softly; "whale" is a smaller word than "microorganism"; "dog", "perro", "chien", "hund", "canis" all mean the same.
Discreteness	Symbols are made by combining smaller symbols that differ discontinuously (e.g., "bin", "pin").
Duality of patterning	The smaller symbols ("p", "t") have no meaning of their own, and can be combined in various ways ("pit", "tip").
Hockett originally thought that the remaining features were exclusively human.	
Displacement	You can talk about something not immediately present (at a distance, or in the past).
Prevarication	We can say things that are false or hypothetical.
Productivity	Novel utterances can be made and understood.
Traditional transmission (culturally)	Languages are socially learned (not genetic), and are passed down through generations.
Learnability	We can learn new languages (easier in childhood).
Reflexiveness	We can use language to talk about language (e.g., "noun", "adjective", "sentence")