LINGUISTICS SPEAKS TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, CREATION, AND BABEL

Sylvia Rasi Gregorutti, Ph.D.
Pacific Union College

LINGUISTICS SPEAKS TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, CREATION, AND BABEL

Sylvia Rasi Gregorutti, Ph.D.
Pacific Union College

Introduction

Linguistics, the scientific study of language, can be described as a "crossroads discipline." Standing at its broad intersection is like traveling to Paris, making your way to the Place de l'Étoile and climbing to the top of the Arc de Triomphe. As you turn in all directions, you see many wide, highly-transited boulevards coming towards you, each with its unique characteristics: The world-famous Champs-Élysées is not Avenue Victor Hugo, nor is it the Avenue de la Grande Armée. It seems that all Paris converges upon the place where you stand. So it is with linguistics: Because language is so intimately connected to human experience, linguistics is a point of centralized traffic, intersecting with fields such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, pedagogy, philosophy, neurology, computer science, history, and theology.

On the leading edge of cognitive science research, linguistics provides analytical tools that, together with those of computer science, neurobiology, philosophy, and psychology, are employed in seeking an explanation for the workings of the human mind. In addition, beginning in the 1950s, linguistics has come to occupy a privileged position in the powerful socio-cultural movement known as postmodernism, and more specifically deconstructivism. Linguistics has become "central [in particular] to contemporary philosophy and hermeneutics," or the interpretation of text (Bartholomew, 2001, p. 131; Taylor, 1985), and philosophy has recently been observed to have taken a "linguistic turn" (Ward, 2002). Influential deconstructivists such as Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, and Lyotard[1] have often explored language-related topics, such as meaning, text, and linguistic symbol.

Consideration of linguistics and the worldviews communicated by its methods and constructs is a worthwhile enterprise. Vanhoozer (2001) affirms, "To study

---

[1] See for example Derrida, J. (1998). *Of Grammatology.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, which is a deconstruction of Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist theory of language; Foucault, M. (2002). *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* Routledge; Lacan, J. (1981). *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins; Lyotard, J. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

language...is to touch on issues involving a whole world and life view" (p. 1). Bartholomew (2001) observes that since Christians are "People of the Book....the debates about language that continue to be central to philosophy and our (postmodern?) cultures should not be thought to be irrelevant. For, clearly, the Bible as 'the recording witness to God's authority' is a linguistic...artefact and its interpretation will not be unrelated to how we think about language" (ibid., p. 134). The major movements of contemporary linguistics have impacted and even "changed the course of biblical studies" (ibid., p. 135).[2] Postmodernism has demonstrated views of language that are antithetical to the Bible as a record of God's authority; thus, Christian scholars should endeavor to understand these positions and effectively address the related arguments based on conviction as well as linguistic science.

This paper will briefly summarize the history of linguistic inquiry, review recent contributions of linguistics to biblical interpretation, and several foundational linguistic issues in the Bible, focusing on Creation and Babel as narrated in the book of Genesis. These objectives are approached from both biblical and linguistic perspectives on the part of a Bible-believing linguist. Analyzing biblical content through a linguistic lens enriches understanding and appreciation of God's Word. Having a biblical worldview as a point of departure also aids in discerning among a variety of theories presented by linguists with worldviews of various stripes. Viewing the Bible through linguistics and out of the conviction of Christian faith facilitates intelligent engagement with contemporary philosophy and aids in the task of interpreting God's Word.

Conducting linguistic analysis of Bible narrative reminds one of the humanity and authenticity of the Bible's authors and its protagonists. Its writers occasionally struggle to communicate the ineffable. All of them labor to deliver a God-given message they have been called to share. As described by Ellen White (1958):

---

[2] These changes have not always been to the benefit of belief in Scripture. As Ward (2002) observes, "[The] growth of philosophical and biblical interest in language and literature might be thought at least to open the possibility for a renewed conception of what the Bible is and of how it functions, and therefore of a renewed confession of the doctrine of Scripture. In fact, though, among theologians who have been influenced by the focusing of interests in language and literature, new linguistic and literary conceptualities are often taken to confirm and deepen, rather than to challenge, the disrepute into which doctrines of Scripture have fallen....This state of affairs is not necessary, however." (pp. 4-5). Nevertheless, "recently, a small number of theologians have adopted the basic concepts of speech act theory for theological purposes, finding in them the resources to develop a renewed conception of Scripture which remains largely in line with orthodox Protestant doctrines of Scripture" (ibid., pp. 13-14).

> The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers. (p. 21)

At times the Bible authors also transmit seemingly mundane information fascinating to the linguist. In reading these everyday details, one is struck anew by Scripture's highly accurate reflection of even commonplace human experience that is surprisingly recognizable in modern times. Though separated from these individuals by time and space, viewing them through a linguistic lens throws them into sharp relief, fills in their outlines, and makes them come alive as the thinking, feeling, speaking, and believing individuals they once were.

Taking God at his word, as communicated through the Bible, encourages the examination of linguistic assumptions and hypotheses in the greater light of the Scriptures. Such an unsurprising effect was commented on by Ellen White (1954):

> In its wide range of style and subjects, the Bible has something to interest every mind and appeal to every heart. In its pages are found history the most ancient; biography the truest to life; principles of government for the control of the state, for the regulation of the household—principles that human wisdom has never equaled. It contains philosophy the most profound; poetry the sweetest and the most sublime, the most impassioned and the most pathetic. Immeasurably superior in value to the productions of any human author are the Bible writings, even when thus considered; but of infinitely wider scope, of infinitely greater value, are they when viewed in their relation to the grand central thought. Viewed in the light of this thought, every topic has a new significance. In the most simply stated truths are involved principles that are as high as heaven and that compass eternity. (p. 505)

The Parisian illustration used at the beginning of this paper might be adapted to better reflect a Christian's perspective: The Arc de Triomphe may represent the centrality of the Bible. All roads, all human disciplines, all truth leads to the Scriptures, and can be a means to arrive there.

Linguistic Inquiry

The study of human language is far from a recent development. Bodine (1992) observes, "People have studied language for virtually as long as they have written about anything" (p. 1).[3] Eight centuries before Christ's birth, Indian grammarians and etymologists investigated topics such as the grammatical categorization of words, semantics, morphology, phonology, and oral versus written language. Some composed pedagogical linguistic texts so their students might learn more effectively. Debates among Indian linguists continued across centuries. The regard these ancient thinkers had for human language is expressed in the deification of speech (*vāk*) found in the *Rigveda*, a collection of sacred Sanskrit hymns, which are among the oldest texts of any Indo-European language (Matilal, 1990).

In China, the 5th c. B.C. *Analects* ascribed to Confucius included semantic observations, which were associated with moral behavior. Chinese philologists active in the third century B.C. produced the first known Chinese linguistic work, a glossary, as well as writings on Chinese dialects and etymology (Harris and Taylor, 1989).

Four centuries before Christ, Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle discussed similar topics, as well as those of prosody and punctuation (Aristotle, trans. 2002). Debate on the origin of language appears at this time, most prominently in Plato's *Cratylus*. Roman ascendance was accompanied by admiration and emulation of the previously dominant Greeks; thus, the ancient world eventually saw a large number of Romans learning Greek as a foreign language. Upper-class students, destined to be leaders of the Empire, were taught by Greek tutors equipped with detailed Greek grammars.

As with modern science, the earliest studies of human language often began with religious impetus. Language study seems to have initially been the outgrowth of a desire to better understand religious texts, and, in the case of the Greeks, the wish to understand the nature and origin of human language. For early Indian linguists, the focus was on interpretation and correct utterance of Hindu Vedic texts. Early Chinese linguists attempted to understand classical texts written in a language that had since changed. A

---

[3] Landsberger *et al.* (1956), cited in Bodine (1992), refers to the study of Sumerian grammar by Babylonian scribes (c. 4,000 B.C.).

greater part of the Greek debate focused on the crucial question: Is language man's creation or of supernatural origin?

When it came to spiritual practice, the earliest linguists were committed to "getting it right," a desire clearly reflected in Hebrew tradition. These "People of the Book" continue to accord great honor to the God's revelation as found in the Torah, the first five books of Hebrew Scripture.[4] In this tradition, respect for the written word is paramount. Even today, the Torah scribes, or *sofer,* copy the scrolls by hand. These individuals believe they are charged with a task of utmost importance: Communicating eternal truths from generation to generation. *Sofer* purify themselves before beginning their work and especially before writing the name of God. Since their labor has eternal consequences, even the most competent scribe has a faithful copy before him ("Torah Scroll Facts," 2008). The result of this painstaking work is a remarkable uniformity in the text across centuries, a consistency which Christians believe to have been guided providentially by God.

Modern linguistics was born in 18th century Europe when comparative and historical linguists determined that languages were systematically interrelated and formed families, such as the Indo-European group. Language was described as a rule-governed system with limited means that could be used in unlimited ways. The father of 20th century linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), established language as a formal system composed of differing elements. His insights impacted European and American linguistics and have been applied beyond the confines of linguistics to the areas of literary criticism, sociology and anthropology. In the late 1950s, the work of Noam Chomsky marked a revolution in linguistic science. He successfully challenged the behaviorist views of human language and behavior, which were dominant during the previous decades and subsequently developed a system of generative grammar, which attempted to describe the entire set of linguistic rules necessary for a person to produce grammatical sentences in his or her native language (Chomsky, 1965).

Linguistic science continues to evolve and grow, retaining an emphasis on the systematic study of human language and an inherently interdisciplinary nature. As

---

[4] Christians are also known as "People of the Book" (Jeffrey, 1985) and Seventh-day Adventists take this label to heart.

indicated initially, linguistic science and related discussions have taken center stage in the exchange of ideas across a number of disciplines. Among the fields impacted by the approaches and findings of linguistics is that of Bible interpretation.

Linguistics and Bible Interpretation

In recent decades, this linguistic-hermeneutic crossroads has seen an exponential increase in intellectual traffic. Bartholomew (2001) states, "the issue of language is at the heart of hermeneutics" (p. 134); thus, it is worthwhile for Christian linguists to become acquainted with the application of linguistic methodology, concepts, and terminology to Bible interpretation. As Robbins explains in his forward to Cook (1995), during the 1980s and 90s, "New Testament scholarship...shifted from a discipline in which textual and hermeneutical practices were subdisciplines of history to an interdiscipline in which language, on the one hand, and society, on the other, stand in unremitting relation to one another" (p. xiii).

Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (1961) stands as a pioneering work, urging the use of linguistic insights in biblical scholarship. Cotterell and Turner's *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (1989) offers a broad introduction to the field of contemporary linguistics as applied to biblical exegesis, and centers on semantics and discourse analysis, as does Silva (1983). Black (1992) introduces students to phonology, morphology, syntax, and other branches of linguistic study relevant to the New Testament scholar. Black (1995) has edited a collection of essays focusing more narrowly on discourse analysis and New Testament material. Silva (1990) considers more specifically topics in lexical semantics (e.g., etymology, semantic change).

Porter (2000) refers to this area of investigation as "biblical linguistics" and has edited a collection of papers on diglossia,[5] including the related topics of code-switching, register, dialects, language change, and a historical sociolinguistic approach to the writings of Paul. Watt (1997) has brought the varied tools of sociolinguistic analysis, and, in particular, code-switching, to bear upon the New Testament. Bodine (1992) has edited a collection of essays on general linguistics and Biblical Hebrew, including the subfields

---

[5] The term *diglossia* describes a situation where, in a particular speech community, two languages or language varieties (dialects) are used. One is prestigious and is used in formal situations; the other is of low prestige, most often a spoken vernacular

of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, discourse analysis, historical/comparative linguistics, and graphemics. More recently, Groom (2003) has applied linguistic tools and methods to investigate meaning in the Classical Hebrew of the Old Testament. O'Donnell (2000, 2005) analyzes New Testament Greek via corpus linguistics, the computer-assisted quantitative analysis of texts in electronic form.

The area of linguistic science most often employed in biblical interpretation is perhaps discourse analysis, which is "the attempt to study the organization of language above the sentence level" (Black, 1992, p. 13). It is also known as text linguistics since the unit of analysis is the entire passage instead of single sentences or isolated words. The analysis of discourse or text in terms of speech acts has proven very fruitful. Originally described by language philosopher Austin (1962), the notion of the speech act refers to the fact that spoken language allows us to both *say* things as well as *do* things. An example of a speech act is making a promise. When I say, "I promise to get to class on time," I am understood to be taking on the obligation to arrive at a certain place at a specific time. A speech act (often known as an "illocutionary act") is an act performed *in* saying something (not the act *of* saying something nor the act performed *by* saying something.)[6] Analyzing the Bible through speech acts has, in the words of Vanhoozer (2001) allowed the possibility of "appreciating what it means to call the Scriptures God's Word" (p. 3). Speech act analysis has been applied to biblical interpretation by many (e.g., Botha, 1991; Cook, 1995; Thiselton, 1992; Upton, 2006; Ward, 2002).[7]

The consensus among contemporary Bible scholars is that seeking out areas in linguistics that may inform biblical interpretation is indeed a valuable undertaking, and

---

[6]Other examples of speech acts include greeting ("Hi, Nina! "), apologizing ("Sorry, honey! "), describing something ("It's hot! "), asking a question ("Is it raining?"), making a request ("Would you help me?"), warning ("Look out!"), challenging ("I bet you can't do that!"), and giving an order ("Come here!").

[7] Speech acts were conceived of by a language philosopher and are most closely linked to the linguistic subfields of pragmatics and semantics. However, they are not the sole "property" of linguistics. The speech act is a common tool in literary analysis, drama theory, literary criticism, and biblical studies (Upton, 2006). As linguistic concepts are applied to diverse fields of knowledge, they are often reinterpreted and otherwise adapted by the new users. Thus, linguists reading contemporary biblical hermeneutics will find that in its new form, what is termed linguistic analysis is more recognizable as such to Bible scholars than to linguists.

given the importance of language to Bible interpretation, a development that has been too long in coming. Thomas (2002) seems to be one of the few critics, pointing to limited applicability and serious limitations of linguistics *vis à vis* hermeneutics. By and large, Bartholomew's (2001) and Vanhoozer's (2002) careful consideration of the methodologies and underlying worldviews of linguistics seems to be the norm, with Bodine (1992) describing linguistics as a "sister discipline" vital to the field of Bible scholarship and on a par with "archaeology, historiography, literary criticism, [and] the social sciences" (p. 2).

Linguistic Topics in the Bible

As a collection of books written by diverse authors in a variety of literary genres, spanning time and socio-cultural space, the Bible provides a wealth of linguistic topics to explore. Some are exemplified by the biblical authors and protagonists themselves such as Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Jesus, Luke, Paul, and Timothy, who were proficient in various languages and dialects, sometimes from differing linguistic families. Other linguistic topics relate to occasions where foreign languages were spoken by individuals due to God's intervention. The two phenomena are: 1) Religious xenoglossia, communicating in a foreign language previously unknown to the speaker (Mark 16: 17; Acts 2: 1-11); and, 2) Glossolalia, the vocalizing of seemingly fluent but unintelligible speech (e.g., Acts 10: 46, 19: 6, 1 Cor. 12: 10, 14: 18-19, 22-24, 26-33, Is. 28:11, the latter text as referenced by Paul).[8]

Also present in the biblical record are stories featuring dialectal (phonological, lexical, and grammatical) differences. Two of the more well-known narratives are 1) Judges 12, where the Gileadites, under the leadership of Judge Jephthah, took control of the fords of the Jordan River and forced fleeing Ephraimites to pronounce the word *shibboleth.* The differing phonological inventories of both communities were common knowledge. In linguistic terms, the Gileadite dialect possessed a palatoalveolar fricative [ʃ] whereas the Ephraimite had only an alveolar fricative [s]. Thus, Ephraimites could do

---

[8] Drawing inspiration from Chomsky and Jung, Johnson (2006), conjectures that glossolalia is the result of the Holy Spirit acting upon the language acquisition device (LAD) with its product being understood only by God.

no other than pronounce the password as "sibboleth", and were swiftly dispatched; 2) Matthew 26, where, despite vehement denials, Peter was revealed to be a Galilean by his dialect. It is possible that his choice of words as well as their pronunciation gave him away as clearly as his dress, appearance, and sympathy for Jesus.[9]

The remainder of the paper will focus on two broader linguistic topics drawing on passages in Genesis (1:1-2:24 and 11:1-9) in order to explore the Bible's statements related to 1) the innateness of human language and language acquisition; and, 2) language origin and diversity.

Innateness and Language Acquisition

Genesis narrates the world's beginning, its plant and animal life, and the origin of humankind. Here we find human beings, both male and female, created as fully-formed, mature humans. As White (1964) explains, "Adam and Eve came forth from the hand of their Creator in the perfection of every physical, mental, and spiritual endowment" (p. 13).

The human being, standing at the pinnacle of God's intensive creative activity, is singled out in the Bible as taking after his Creator.

> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.
>
> So God created man in his own image,
> in the image of God he created him;
> male and female he created them.
> (Genesis 1: 27)[10]

---

[9] Watt (2000) provides a thorough treatment of factors contributing to Peter's identification as a Galilean. To these two examples might be added the events narrated in 2 Kings 18:17-28, where an invading Assyrian general chose to speak in the Judean dialect of Hebrew in order to be understood by the common Israelites. This decision was taken over and against the pleas of the Israelite élite, who asked that the Aramaic *lingua franca* be employed in the shouted dialogue so as to keep the commoners from comprehending.

[10] Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations are from the New International Version (1984) by the International Bible Society.

Since Adam and Eve were created in God's image, there was "a correspondence with the being of God....[which] made the divine/human dialogue possible" (Johnson, 2006, pp. 30-31).

Before examining humans' innate linguistic capacity, let us consider the assertion that the God of the Christian faith is one who speaks. As Ben Johnson observes, "From the very beginning the people of God have been engaged in listening for God and speaking what they have heard God say." The Bible itself is "a convincing document describing a community of people who believed that the Creator God spoke and that they were charged with telling the world what they heard" (Johnson, 2006, p. ix).

Christians believe that men and women hear, recognize, and respond to God's voice. In this sense "[t]he God who speaks contrasts sharply with all the pagan gods" of biblical times "and the substitute gods of every era" (Johnson, 2004, p. 8), a notion made clear by the composer of Psalm 115.

> Our God is in heaven;
> he does whatever pleases him.
> But their idols are silver and gold,
> made by the hands of men.
> They have mouths, but cannot speak,
> eyes, but they cannot see;
> they have ears, but cannot hear,
> noses, but they cannot smell;
> they have hands, but cannot feel,
> feet, but they cannot walk;
> nor can they utter a sound with their throats.
> Those who make them will be like them,
> and so will all who trust in them.
> (Psalm 115: 3-8)

In the Bible and in Christian experience, God discloses himself to his creatures in different ways: Intuition, imagination, sermons, dreams, visions, witnesses, Scripture, and life experiences, to mention a few. Many of these means are present in the Bible, as is God's voice, heard in his calling of Abraham to leave behind his homeland and set off for the unknown (Genesis 12: 1-3). More examples might be added, including the actual hearing of God's own voice (e.g., Acts 9:7, Rev. 1:10).[11] As Johnson (2004) comments,

---

[11] Perhaps what occurred in these and other similar instances was that God made it possible for humans to hear (and withstand) his voice, an idea forwarded by Johnson (2004).

linguists consider that "speech is used primarily to initiate and maintain social relationships and secondarily to transfer information...Conversation is primarily interpersonal, not transactional....[Thus, t]he God who speaks opens doors of relatedness in all who hear" (p. 10).

The claim that God speaks, a tenet essential to Jewish, Muslim, and Christian faiths, is neither anthropomorphism nor fulfillment of the Freudian claim that God is merely a projection of the unconscious desire for a loving father figure (Johnson, 2004, p. 11). If the Bible is taken literally, its claim that humans are made in God's image suggests that the Creator does indeed possess speech. The metaphorical understanding of God's speech held by some literary critics does not preclude the possibility that God did actually speak (ibid., p. 12).

"The Word of God, the Logos, served as the agent of creation—'All things came into being through him.' He had the power to form what had never been, to change nonbeing into being....In the process of creation through this agency of the Word, Christ's fingerprints marked every created being. Nothing he created is alien to him; everything has the potential of communicating with him or being acted upon by him" (Johnson, 2004, p. 19).

God not only spoke to individuals such as Abraham and Moses but came to Earth as the Word wrapped in human flesh—Jesus Christ.

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the
> Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into
> being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What
> has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all
> people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not
> overcome it....And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we
> have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and
> truth....No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to
> the Father's heart, who has made him known. (John 1: 1-5, 14, 18,
> NRSV).

Language philosopher Nicolas Wolterstorff (1995) asks, "Might it be that in addition to *homo linguisticus*...there is a *deus loquens*?" (p. ix). His conclusion: Because of God's nature, he *must* speak. God is a member of the community of speakers that he created. He explains, "The traditional assumption that divine speech is reducible to divine revelation was not just fortuitous error; an interesting reason was sometimes offered.

[The reasoning was s]ince God has no vocal cords with which to utter words, and no hands with which to write them down, God cannot literally speak, cannot literally be a participant in a linguistic community. Accordingly, attributions of speech to God, if not judged bizarrely false, must be taken as metaphorical" (p. 10)–but metaphorical of *what?* asks Wolterstorff. Usually, the answer has been that the metaphor of God speaking is that of divine revelation, which Wolterstorff rejects.

However interesting the possibility that God might cause the sounding of speech or inscription of words despite his incorporeality, Wolterstorff pursues a line of reasoning supported by speech act analysis (Austin, 1962). As indicated previously, speech acts are units of analysis based on the observation that by saying things, we often also simultaneously *do* things. Broadly speaking, the utterances that are termed illocutionary acts are exemplified by situations such as a preacher joining two people in marriage by saying, "I now pronounce you husband and wife." Wolterstorff observes that God performs many illocutionary actions–He commands, promises, blesses, forgives, exhorts, assures, asserts, etc. This is particularly evident in many of God's acts during Creation. The following are but a few of the many possible examples:

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so.

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so.   (Genesis 1: 3, 9, 24)

God speaks and has the rights as well as the duties of a speaker. In sum, God is a full participant in a speech community and his word is itself considered to be "living and active" (Heb. 4:12).[12]

Returning to the question of the creation of humans in God's image, it may be concluded that since God is *deus loquens,* a God who speaks, it follows that his creatures have also been endowed from the outset with a linguistic capacity. Ellen White (1900)

---

[12] Wolterstorff skillfully extends speech act theory in defense against deconstructionists such as Derrida, who asserts that authorial discourse (i.e., interpreting a text to find out what its author said) is, in most cases, intellectually indefensible.

states "man...[was] made in the image of God, endowed with reason and speech" (p. 81). The capacity for comprehension is evident as God speaks to the first humans, blessing them, explaining to them their tasks on earth (Genesis 1: 28), orienting them to the rest of creation (Genesis: 1: 29-30), and commanding them to stay clear of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2: 16). During creation and beyond, God uses speech to exert his sovereignty—his government.

The linguistic endowment given by God to humans is further evident in Adam's creative use of language as he carries out the command to name the animals (Genesis 2: 19-20). The first utterance ascribed to the first man is a love poem, composed and recited by Adam upon meeting his counterpart and companion, Eve.

> This is now bone of my bones
> and flesh of my flesh;
> she shall be called 'woman,'
> for she was taken out of man.
> (Genesis 1: 23)

This perspective rather naturally connects with the philosophy of innatism, which asserts that humans are not born *tabula rasa*, as a blank slate that is ready to be written on, but instead, that humans are born with a preexisting mental structure. Such preexisting knowledge is universal—it is possessed by humans at birth and is not gained through experience (*nature* vs. nurture, *heredity* vs. environment).

In 1966, Noam Chomsky published his views on linguistic innateness, countering the prevailing the behaviorist views of language and behavior promoted by B. F. Skinner and others. In so doing, Chomsky helped spark the cognitive revolution, an intellectual movement whose proponents affirmed that mental events, while not publicly observable, can be studied and used to make testable inferences about human mental processes, with the study of artificial intelligence and computer science among the ways of doing so ("Noam Chomsky", 2008).

Chomsky (1966) did not claim sole creative authorship for his nativist views but credited the 18th century rationalist thinkers (e.g., von Humboldt, Leibnitz, Descartes, Kant) with this perspective. These notions descend from Aristotle, who held that truths were not to be arrived at solely through sensory means but especially intellectually and deductively. In *De Interpretatione,* one of the earliest Western philosophical works to

comprehensively consider the relationship of linguistics and logic, Aristotle expressed a rationalist view of language, stating:

> Words spoken are symbols or signs of affection or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies.
> (Aristotle, trans. 1962, p. 115)

Chomsky's claim was that human language is a genetic endowment and not a skill acquired by imitation and positive reinforcement of behavior. This belief, stated in emphatic terms (it is an *endowment* and not merely a genetic *accomplishment*), answers puzzles such as the ease with which children learn complex language. All children are hypothesized to have an innate knowledge of the basic grammatical structure common to all human languages (i.e. children assume that any language encountered possesses restrictions of some kind). This innate knowledge is also known as Universal Grammar and, in its original formulation, was thought to be present in all human beings in the form of a "black box" or Language Acquisition Device (LAD). The LAD was said to be equipped with a grammar that is universal, not belonging to any particular language, but to all human languages, setting limits to what is possible and impossible.[13] According to some, the LAD is subject to maturational constraints (i.e., it becomes unavailable after a certain age – the "critical period hypothesis").

While retaining a rationalist perspective, the Principles and Parameters approach introduced by Chomsky (1981, Chomsky and Lasnik, 1993) abandoned the notion of the LAD in favor of the grammatical principles underlying languages that are both innate and fixed. All human languages are described in terms of parameter settings in the brain (e.g., the pro-drop parameter, which indicates whether an explicit subject is always

---

[13] There have been many criticisms of Chomsky's nativist posture. The strongest criticisms from within linguistics are from those who point out that the process of formulating grammatical rules as he describes it does not require a social context for the individual to learn the language in question. Another significant challenge to Chomsky's idea of the LAD comes from Piaget (Inhelder and Piaget [1958]) and others who hold there is no specifically *linguistic* capacity in humans, but instead, a general *cognitive* capacity. The interactionist theory of Bruner (1983) and Piaget later emphasized the importance of the interaction between biological and social (nature and nurture) aspects of language acquisition (the term Language Acquisition Support System [LASS]).

required, as in English [*She speaks Spanish.*], or can be optionally dropped, as in Spanish [*Habla español.*]). These parameters are likened to "on-off" or binary switches.[14]

Learning the specific language, whatever it might be (it is all the same for an infant to learn Arabic as Mandarin Chinese or Swahili) is simply a matter of triggering hard-wired structures or awakening the child's inherent capacity rather than imprinting upon an unformed mass. According to Chomsky, in order to acquire a language a child must learn morphemes (the smallest unit of language that carries meaning), words, and idioms, and have sufficient information (i.e., a limited number of key examples) to determine the specific parameter settings of the language in question. The notions of principles and parameters help explain the amazingly rapid rate at which children learn languages.

These hypotheses regarding human language lend themselves to interesting applications in considering God's communication with humans as well as the sharing of God's Good News with others. Johnson (2006) comments:

> [Chomsky's] theory suggests that since all persons have within them a genetically endowed capacity for speech, the speech of God is translingual. God may speak to any group of people in their language, and they can understand what God says and appropriate it. These people can then speak to each other in their own tongue and declare what God has said. This speech of God can be translated into other languages and still be understood because of the LAD that all people are endowed with. (p. 35)

Our first parents were God's perfect creations, able to communicate with him despite their status as creatures.

> He [God] had endowed Adam with powers of mind superior to any living creature that he had made. His mental powers were but little lower than those of the angels. He could become familiar with the sublimity and glory of nature, and understand the character of his Heavenly Father in his created works. (White, 1874)

Regarding language acquisition in the first man and woman, one may surmise that, as perfect creatures capable of communication with their Creator, they possessed the innate

---

[14] While retaining the core concept of principles and parameters, Chomsky's more recent Minimalist Program (1995), has stripped language of "all but the barest necessary elements, while advocating a general approach to the architecture of the human language faculty that emphasizes principles of economy and optimal design" ("Principles and Parameters," 2008).

capacity for speech. Pinker (1994) describes this capacity, variously referred to as "psychological faculty...mental organ...neural system...[and] computational module," as an "instinct". Pinker feels that this "quaint" term best conveys "the idea that people know how to talk in more or less in the sense that spiders know how to spin webs" (p. 5).[15]

In order for the faculty of speech to develop, interaction with a speech community is essential. "An innate grammar is useless if you are the only one possessing it: it is a tango of one, the sound of one hand clapping" (Pinker, 1994, p. 244). The classical definition of a speech community is "any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage" (Gumperz, 1982: p. 219). In other words, a speech community is the group of individuals who use language among themselves in a mutually accepted way (i.e., they share linguistic norms).

The tragic, and sometimes horrific, examples of feral children, who are deprived of normal human contact during their first years of life, show that under such altered circumstances, humans develop only the most rudimentary form of speech, and this, only when there has been at least minimal exposure to other humans. For those children who learn animal habits instead of human, there has been no enculturation into human society. Thus, learning language is virtually impossible, as is engaging meaningfully with other humans, even after intensive and loving care extending for years (Newton, 2003).

The Bible provides clear evidence of a speech community: God (probably in his triune–*Elohim*–form) communicated with his human creation. Other members of Adam and Eve's speech community were the hosts of heavenly angels.[16]

> Adam could reflect that he was created in the image of God, to be like
> Him in righteousness and holiness. His mind was capable of continual

---

[15]Bible-believing Christians and Pinker clearly differ, however, with respect to evolution, with Pinker clearly of the Darwinist persuasion. Pinker (1994) considers language "not as the ineffable essence of human uniqueness" but as "a biological adaptation to communicate information" and "one of nature's engineering marvels" (pp. 5-6).

[16] Clearly, this speech community differs from the traditional one in certain respects; namely, 1) it consisted of more than just a human component (i.e., it was more than a solely "*human* aggregate"); 2) at the time of creation, the community could not be said to be "set off from similar aggregates," since no similar human communities existed at the time and, in any case, were apparently not distinctively different from other groups until after Babel.

cultivation, expansion, refinement and noble elevation, for God was his teacher, and angels were his companions. (White, 1964, p. 13)

Speculating upon a long process of language acquisition for Adam and Eve is unnecessary (Wilkinson, 1995). All the requisite elements were in place: Creatures endowed with superior intellect, the innate capacity for language, and a speech community composed of the Godhead and angels. It may be surmised that human language was present, fully-formed upon the creation of both man and woman. However, based on analysis of God's behavior with Adam in the "naming episode" (Genesis 2: 19-20), room for growth was part of the design. Because it provides some insight into the Creator's design methods this part of the creation narrative will be analyzed in greater detail.

Since God had spoken the greater part of creation into existence (light, day, night, etc.), naming them after their appearance, it was clearly within his abilities to both create and name the animals. However, Genesis 2: 19-20 shows God bringing his animal creation to Adam "to see what he will name them" (v. 19). The process of naming has been observed to have several purposes. By assigning names to the animals, Adam: 1) established dominion over them, a situation analogous to that of God's action as Creator; 2) analyzed and categorized the animals, and in this way was made to realize he was different; 3) discovered that there were male and female versions of the mammals, and, in so doing, became aware of his own lack of and need for a human companion; 4) used his God-given linguistic creativity to assign names, whether arbitrary or related to appearance or the animal voices, and, eventually, named his partner; and 5) in doing so, becomes a creator of sorts, for, "whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name" (v. 19) (Barker, as cited in Wilkinson, 1995).

This narrative, showing how God allowed Adam to go through the process of language discovery as he names the animals and addresses his new companion, indicates the Creator would be within character in stepping back to see how his creature, *homo linguisticus,* with his innate predisposition to language, handled himself linguistically.

We might consider how Adam and Eve's tragic choice affected their ability to communicate with God and with each other (Rasi, 1992; Van Leeuwen, 1990); however,

we will turn to a second case of "large-scale language dysfunction" with long-term consequences for humankind: the Babel narrative of Genesis 11.

Language Origin and Linguistic Diversity

In its origins accounts (Genesis 1-2) the Bible reveals enough information to conclude that human language originated with the divine creation of the first man and woman. Fast-forwarding generations to just after the Flood, the linguistic situation is described explicitly. A simple reading of the Bible narrative indicates that the entire human population spoke a single, unified language.

> Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there....Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel–because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth. (Genesis 11: 1-2, 4-9)

A considerable amount of time had passed since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden; however, it appears that human language had not diverged significantly–it had not broken apart into mutually unintelligible dialects, much less separate languages. There is no indication that human language at the time was different than that of today, such that change was completely absent. Thus, the rate of language change may have been slower than that evident in today's world languages with lengthy life spans contributing to this effect.[17]

God's original plan was for humankind to disperse (Gen. 1:28); however, the plan was not to do so in a state of miscommunication or linguistic isolation. In writing about the builders of Babel's tower, Ellen White (1890) states:

---

[17] In terms of language change, the global language situation referred to in Genesis 11 could be understood to be parallel, albeit in much more conservative fashion, that of contemporary Icelandic. Over the past 1,000 years, Icelandic has preserved over 97% of its vocabulary, versus 68% for English (Poser, 2003).

It was His [God's] purpose that as men should go forth to found nations in different parts of the earth they should carry with them a knowledge of His will, that the light of truth might shine undimmed to succeeding generations. Noah, the faithful preacher of righteousness, lived for three hundred and fifty years after the Flood, Shem for five hundred years, and thus their descendants had an opportunity to become acquainted with the requirements of God and the history of His dealings with their fathers. But they were unwilling to listen to these unpalatable truths; they had no desire to retain God in their knowledge; and by the confusion of tongues they were, in a great measure, shut out from intercourse with those who might have given them light. (p. 120)

The account of a single human language in use at the time of Babel has led one scholar to suggest that, with the possession of a Universal Grammar, "primeval man was able to use the complete spectrum...without being constrained by parameters, as languages are today and have been since the diversification of language at the Tower of Babel" (Wilkinson, 1995, p. 17). It is worth considering the possibility that "the first man and woman may have used a Universal Grammar to produce a Universal Language, and that this singular form of expression endured for many generations until the time of the diversification of language at the tower of Babel, when the Universal Language became many languages governed by and severely constrained by a parametized Universal Grammar" (ibid., p. 18).[18]

Pinker (1994) observes perceptively (albeit rather facetiously) that "God did not have to do much to confound the language of Noah's descendants." He merely needed to change a few of the parameters–the areas in which in Universal Grammar allows variation. God could have chosen to alter vocabulary (for example, replacing the English *brick* with Italian *mattone*), changing word order ("lift brick" vs. "brick lift") and perhaps creating "a particular grammatical widget" do important work in one language and not in another, and in so doing, wreak havoc with the tower-builders' ambitious scheme.[19]

---

[18] The capitalization of Universal Language is Wilkinson's own; there is no common use of the term in linguistic literature.
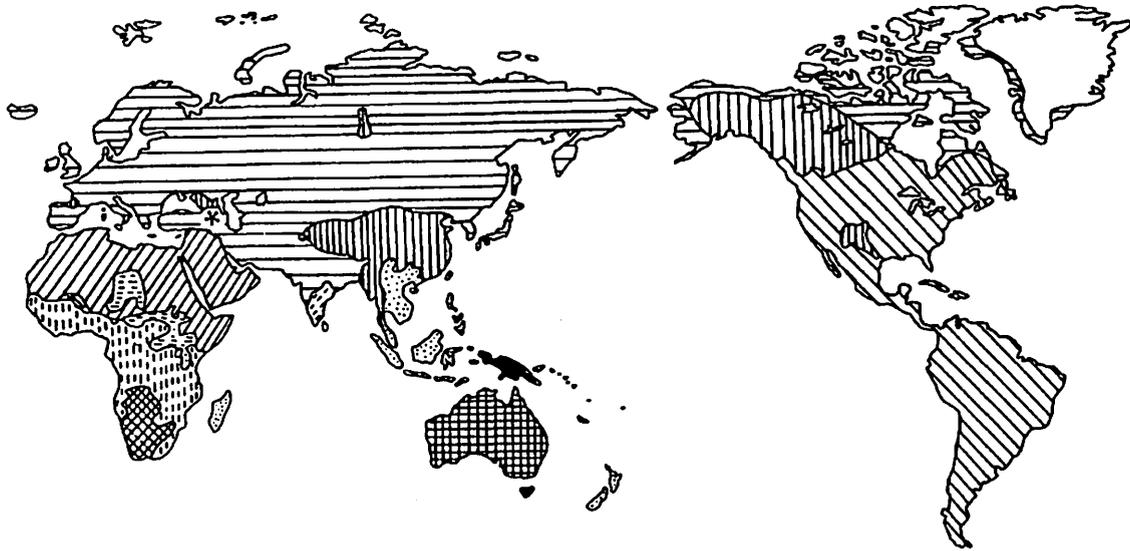
[19] Not all scholars interpret the Genesis 11 narrative as one describing the loss of a common language. Smith and Carville (2000) assert that this interpretation is relatively recent, appearing during the Middle Ages when Latin was being lost as a European *lingua franca*. They assert that "early church interpreters...[were] more preoccupied with the theme of pride" in the Babel story (p. 209). Smith and Carvill are intrigued by Uehlinger's notion that "one lip" or "one speech" is a metaphor for the subjugation or assimilation of conquered peoples as well as a reference to the tower builders' common plans. It seems, nonetheless, that theirs is a minority view.

Researchers in the field of glottogony are those who conduct linguistic analysis with the objective of determining origins, and consider the monogenesis of human language as fact. This is particularly remarkable since these scholars are almost without exception committed evolutionists. Those working in genetic linguistics, which "studies the genealogical relationships of languages and language families" (Ruhlen 1994, p. 83), trace the prehistory of human languages. Their task is complicated by the fact that speech is an inherently evanescent phenomenon. "Written language, so far as anyone knows, is only about 5,000 years old–and spoken language by itself leaves no historical trace at all" (ibid., p. 17).

The technique of glottochronology, which is related by analogy with radiocarbon dating, has been employed in the quest for extra-biblical evidence of linguistic monogenesis (also known as Mother Tongue Theory). While the Bible-believing linguist would most likely question this dating method, the monogenetic theory offers much that is of interest to those who hold a Bible-based worldview. In rejecting the multiregional hypothesis, which holds that modern language evolved independently on all continents, the monogenetic hypothesis is compatible with the biblical account in its assertion that there was once a single language ("Proto-World") from which all human languages descended. According to Ruhlen (1994), one of its most well-known proponents, "we are able to reach back into prehistorical times and reconstruct portions of languages that existed at that time by extrapolating backward on the basis of contemporary languages and our knowledge of how languages change over time" (ibid., p. 17), arriving at the conclusion that "all extant languages share a common origin" (ibid., p. 55).

Proponents of the Proto-World hypothesis, such as Greenberg (1963, 1987), Ruhlen (1994), and a group of Russian linguists (Dogopolsky, Starostin, Sheveroshkin, Illich-Svitych, cited in Pinker, 1994) have attempted to reconstruct the Proto-World language based on the roughly 5,000 existing human languages as well as data from languages that have become extinct. The reconstruction is based on comparative linguistics, which includes mass lexical comparison, global cognates, and the classification of language families taken to its farthest extrapolation. One of the more

conservative results is classification of all human languages into twelve language families depicted on Ruhlen's map (1994: 108-109, Map 8) below.

MAP 8 Language Families of the World.

▨	Khoisan	▨	Dravidian	⦂⦂	Austric
▥	Niger-Kordofanian	*	Kartvelian	■	Indo-Pacific
▦	Nilo-Saharan	▤	Eurasiatic	▦	Australian
▨	Afro-Asiatic	▥	Dene-Caucasian	▨	Amerind

The classification of languages leading to a single origin has a long history. In the era of modern linguistics the more well-known researchers include Danish linguist Holger Pedersen in the early 1900s and his contemporaries, Italian linguist Alfredo Trombetti, and American linguist Edward Sapir, as well as Sapir's student, Morrish Swadesh. According to Ruhlen (1994), who follows in the tradition, these efforts were largely been met with skepticism and outright hostility, particularly on the part of historical linguists and especially by Indo-Europeanists. One early American critic, William Dwight Whitney, wrote in 1867 that, "'linguistic science is not now, and cannot ever hope to be, in condition to give an authoritative opinion respecting the unity or

variety of our species'"(Whitney 1867: 383, as cited in Ruhlen, 1994: p. 71). The most persistent claim is that "linguistic change is so rapid that after around 6,000 years all traces of earlier relationships have been obliterated by constant phonetic and semantic erosion" (Ruhlen 1994, p. 76). Those who support the hypothesis of monogenesis reject this notion.

Diligent pursuit of the primeval language by Proto-World proponents does not translate into acceptance of the Bible narrative, much as Chomsky's views of innateness and the presence of a Universal Grammar do not lead to recognition of a creation or a Creator.[20] Ruhlen (1994) asserts that the Indo-Europeanists so strongly opposed to Mother Tongue Theory and its research are "in practice, if not in their theoretical pronouncements...strictly creationist" (ibid., p. 93). He comments that those scholars heaping verbal abuse on his mentor, Greenberg (whose *Language in the Americas* [1987], showed that Native American languages could be categorized into just three families) was of the kind "usually reserved for religious heretics rather than scholars with new ideas" (ibid., p. 91). Ruhlen affirms that "ironically, the only explanation *not* mentioned by these scholars is the simple evolutionary one...[However,] an evolutionary answer, plausible or not, is simply not acceptable" [to them] (ibid., p. 93). This is indeed a curious situation: Linguists who are committed evolutionists conduct research seeking the monogenetic origin of human language, and appear to have forwarded a plausible hypothesis, while those who most strongly reject the methods and conclusions of such research are said to be creationists. This merits careful study and comment by committed and trained Christian linguists.

Returning to the case of categorization of Native American language families, reconstruction efforts are supplemented by the findings of dental records (Turner, 1989 as cited in Ruhlen, 1994), and in the case of the vast majority of world languages analyzed, by the findings of archeologists and genetic researchers. The latter field has evolved independently of glottogony, but has arrived at remarkably similar ethnolinguistic groupings. The whole has come to be referred to as an emerging synthesis. Directed by

---

[20] Nevertheless, Chomsky remains skeptical of evolution and natural selection, concluding that the innate organization of language is a mystery (Wilkinson, 1995). He observes, "A human language is a system of remarkable complexity. To come to know a human language would be an extraordinary intellectual achievement for a creature not specifically designed to accomplish this task" (Chomsky, 1975, p. 118).

population geneticist Cavalli-Sforza and his colleagues (1988, 1994, 2000), the genetic research is based primarily on analysis of nuclear genetic material (e.g., blood groups, proteins, enzymes). Ruhlen (1994, p. 150, Figure 10) has prepared a chart showing the close parallels between his own linguistic conclusions and the genetic findings of Cavalli-Sforza (1988). Based on these data, an additional chart shows the proposed genealogical structure of the human population (Figure 12).
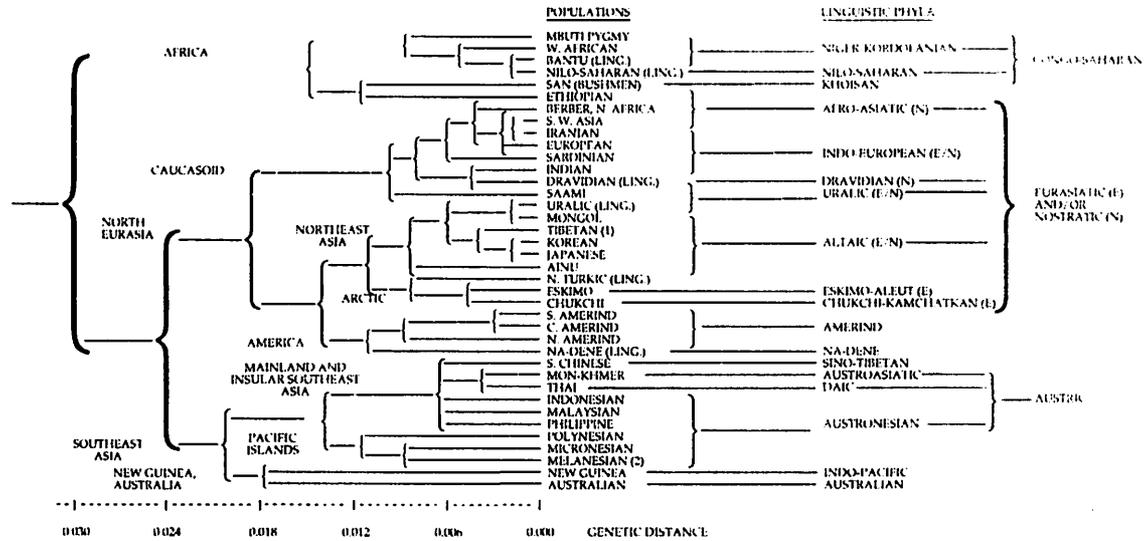
FIGURE 10   A Comparison of biological and linguistic classifications, after Cavalli-Sforza et al., 1988.
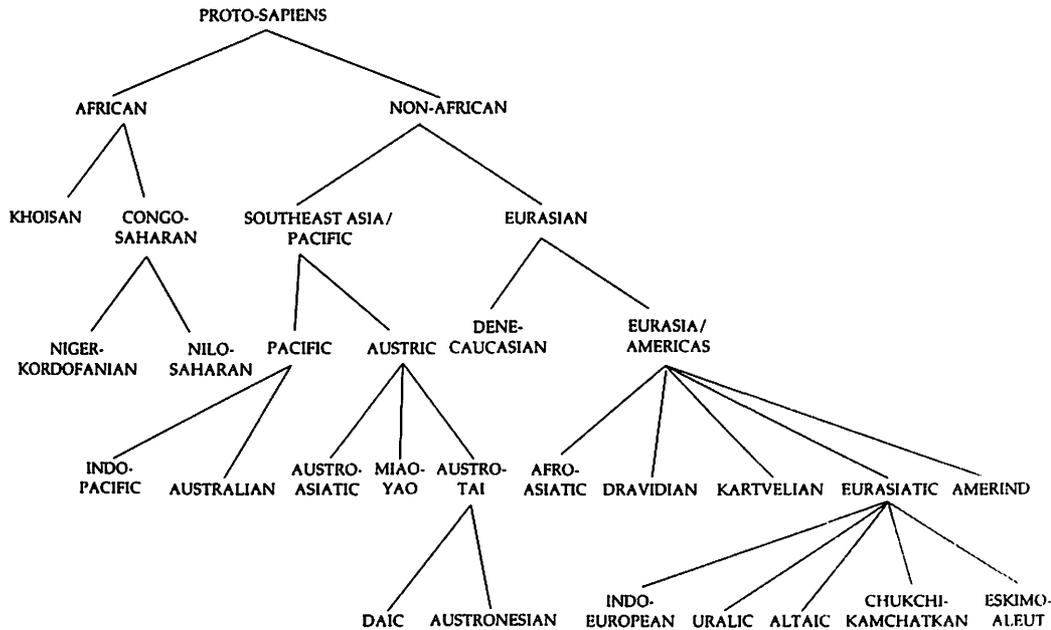
FIGURE 12   The genealogical structure of the human population.

Interested Christian linguists and lay readers will find this research fascinating, in particular, as it shows increasing areas of overlap in studies of language, culture, and genetics, and provides an obvious parallel to the Bible's account of language origins and diversity. Ongoing research in these areas merits monitoring for further developments, as well as in-depth consideration and comment.

In his book *Tower of Babel: The Evidence Against the New Creationism* (2000) scientific philosopher Robert Pennock presents linguistics as a "case study for an examination of...basic issues in philosophy of science" (p. xi). He affirms that "linguistic evolution has strong theoretical parallels with biological evolution both in content and in the sort of evidence scientists use to draw conclusions about it; but it is also pointedly relevant to creationism, in that Genesis tells us that language did not evolve but was specially created by God in the great confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel" (p. xii).

In reference to an Intelligent Design proponent Michael Behe, Pennock notes that "one must be very careful when making arguments from analogy to see to it that the analogy is a fair one–the points of the analogy really must be 'just so' if the analogy is to succeed in doing its work" (ibid., p. 169). However, Pennock apparently does not apply the observation to his own hypotheses–he elsewhere admits that the biology: linguistics analogy is not perfect" (p. 144), and while he asserts that "the strong parallels between linguistic and biological evolution with regard to the common descent hypothesis are clear," he also questions whether "the parallels also hold for mechanisms" (p. 137).

Pennock's view of the supposed beliefs of Bible-believing linguists is erroneous. Those referred to as "creationist linguists" are mainly creationist scientists who are members of the Institute for Creation Research, and may make pronouncements on linguistic topic. However, they are, in fact, no more linguists than is Pennock himself. He asserts that the notion of linguistic evolution is rejected by Bible-believing linguists, and thus implies that they hold that the languages emerging at the time of Babel have remained unchanged since then. While this may have been true of some Bible-believing

scholars in the past, [21] this does not hold true of contemporary Christian linguists schooled in modern linguistic methodology yet hold the Bible account to be true. Pennock's entire work, and particularly the section addressing linguistics and the supposed beliefs of Bible-believing linguist scholars, deserves a detailed response, which will not be undertaken here.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the centrality of language to human experience, and shows linguistics to be a science with a lengthy history, reflecting enduring human interest in it. Linguistics occupies a prominent position at the crossroads of contemporary postmodern thought and cognitive science. With respect to linguistics and the Bible, many scholars apply contemporary linguistic theory, particularly in the form of speech acts, to interpretation of both Old and New Testaments. Finally, the quintessentially linguistic topics of innateness, language acquisition, language origins, and language diversity have been considered, taking as foundational texts the passages found in Genesis 1 and 2, and Genesis 11: 1-9.

True to its nature, the Bible has essential things to say about linguistics and human language, and, true to its nature, linguistics goes some way towards providing scientific explanations for the linguistic phenomena recorded therein. Despite the excitement that language research brings to linguists, in some part brought about by our fallenness, linguists who are believing and practicing Christians long for the day in which we will not see "but a poor reflection as in a mirror" but instead, "shall see face to face"– a time when we will no longer miscommunicate either with members of our own speech communities or those belonging to other groups. To further paraphrase 1 Corinthians 13:12, human language as we know it "will pass away", or perhaps will be restored to its original condition. When all things are made new, we will not "know in part" but instead will know fully, "even as we are fully known" and all, "every nation, tribe, people and language" will stand together singing praises to God in one voice (Rev. 7: 9-10, 15: 3).

---

[21] "The traditional, Christian view [is] that languages, divinely created, were immutable in the same way and for the same reason that biological species were taken to be immutable" (Pennock, pp. 134-135).

REFERENCES

Aristotle (1962) The Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics. (H. P. Cooke & H. Tredennick, Trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Barr, J. (1961). *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. London: Oxford University Press.

Bartholomew, C. (2001). Before Babel and After Pentecost: Language, Literature, and Biblical Interpretation. In: Bartholomew, C., Greene, C., & Möller, K. (Eds.) *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (pp. 131-170). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Black, D. (1995). *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Application*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Black, D. (Ed.) (1992). *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*. Nashville: Broadman Press.

Bodine, W. R. (Ed.) (1992). *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Botha, J. E. (1991). *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: A Speech Act Rendering of John 4: 1-42*. New York: Brill.

Bruner, J. (1983) *Child's Talk: Learning to Use Language*. New York: Norton.

Cavalli-Sforza, L. L. (2000). *Genes, Peoples, and Languages*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cavalli-Sforza, L. L., Piazza, A., & Menozzi, P. (1994). *History and Geography of Human Genes*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.

Cavalli-Sforza, L. L., Piazza, A., Menozzi, P., & Mountain, J. (1988). Reconstruction of Human Evolution: Bringing Together Genetic, Archeological and Linguistic Data. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 85: 6002-06.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Chomsky, N. (1966). *Cartesian linguistics: a chapter in the history of rationalist thought*. New York: Harper & Row.

Chomsky, N. (1975). *Reflections on Language*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Chomsky, N. (1981). *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Mouton de Gruyter.

Chomsky, N. & Lasnik, H. (1993) Principles and Parameters Theory, in *Syntax: An International Handbook of Contemporary Research*, Berlin: de Gruyter.

Cook, J. G. (1995). *The Structure and Persuasive Power of Mark: A Linguistic Approach.* Atlanta: Scholars.

Cotterell, P. & Turner, M. (1989). *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Feral child. (2008, March 14). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.* Retrieved March 18, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:Cite&page=Feral_child&id =198149801

Greenberg, J. H. (1987). *Language in the Americas.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Greenberg, J. H. (Ed.) (1963) *Universals of Language.* Cambridge, MA: Massachussetts Institute of Technology Press.

Groom, S. A. (2003). *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew.* Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster.

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). The Speech Community. In Giglioli, P. P. (Ed.) *Language and Social Context* (pp. 219-231). New York: Penguin.

Harris, R., & Taylor, T. J. (1989). *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought: The Western Tradition from Socrates to Saussure.* London: Routledge.

Inhelder, B. and J. Piaget (1958). *The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence.* New York: Basic Books.

Jeffrey, L. D. (1996). *People of the Book: Christian Identity and Literary Culture.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Johnson, B. (2006). *GodSpeech: Putting Divine Disclosures into Human Words.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Johnson, B. (2004). *The God Who Speaks: Learning the Language of God.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Matilal, B. K. (1990). *The Word and the World: India's Contribution to the Study of Language.* New York; Oxford University Press.

Newton, M. (2003). *Savage Girls and Wild Boys: A History of Feral Children.* London: Faber.

Noam Chomsky. (2008, March 14). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noam_Chomsky

O'Donnell, M. B. (2005). *Corpus Linguistics and the Greek of the New Testament.* Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.

O'Donnell, M. B. (2000). Designing and Compiling a Register-Balanced Corpus of Hellenistic Greek for the Purpose of Linguistic Description and Investigation. In: Porter, S. E. (Ed.). *Diglossia and Other Topics in New Testament Linguistics* (pp. 255-297). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Pennock, R. T. (1999). *Tower of Babel: The Evidence Against the New Creationism.* Cambridge: MIT.

Pinker, S. (1994). *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language.* New York: William Morrow.

Porter, S. E. (Ed.) (2000). *Diglossia and Other Topics in New Testament Linguistics.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Poser, B. (2003). Dating Indo-European. *University of Pennsylvania Language Log.* Retrieved March 14, 2008, from http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/000208.html

Principles and Parameters. (2008, March 14). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved March 18, 2008, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principles_and_parameters

Rasi, S. (1992). Why Don't You Understand Me?. *College and University Dialogue*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1992), pp. 5-7, 29-30.

Ruhlen, M. (1994). *The Origin of Language: Tracing the Evolution of the Mother Tongue.* New York: John Wiley.

Ruhlen, M. (1991). *A Guide to the World's Languages,* Vol. 1: Classification. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford.

Silva, M. (1983). *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Silva, M. (1990). *God, Language, and Scripture: Reading the Bible in the Light of General Linguistics.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Smith, D. I. and Barbara Carvill (2000). *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Taylor, C. (1985). Theories of Meaning. In: Taylor, C. *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers.* (pp. 248-292). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thiselton, A. (1992). *New Horizons in Hermeneutics.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Thomas, R. (2002). *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old.* Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.

Torah Scroll Facts. (2008, March 14). In *Chabad.org The Synagogue.* Retrieved March 14, 2008 from http://www.chabad.org/library/howto/wizard_cdoaid/351655/jewish/Torah -Scroll-Facts.htm

Upton, B. G. (2006). *Hearing Mark's Endings: Listening to Ancient Popular Texts Through Speech Act Theory.* Boston: Brill.

Vanhoozer, K. (2001). *From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts.* In: Bartholomew, C. , Greene, C., and Möller, K. (Eds.) *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation.* (pp. 1-49). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Van Leeuwen, M. (1990). *Gender and Grace: Women and Men in a Changing World.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Ward, T. (2002). *Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts, and the Sufficiency of Scripture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Watt, J. M. (1997). *Code-Switching in Luke and Acts.* New York: Peter Lang.

Watt, J. M. (2000). Of Gutterals and Galileans: The Two Slurs of Matthew 26.73. In: Porter, S. E. (Ed.). *Diglossia and Other Topics in New Testament Linguistics* (pp. 107-120). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

White, E. (1874). *Redemption, No. 1. Present Truth.* Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

White, E. G. (1890). *Patriarchs and Prophets.* Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing.

White, E. G. (1954). *Child Guidance.* Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

White, E. G. (1958). *Selected Messages, Book 1.* Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

White, E. G. (1964). *That I May Know Him.* Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing.

White, E. G. (1990). *Christ's Object Lessons.* Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Wilkinson, L. M. (1995). *Linguistic Issues in Genesis.* University of Texas, El Paso.

Wolterstorff, N. (1995). *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections of the Claim that God Speaks.* Cambridge: Cambridge.