The Building Blocks of Language

- **Phoneme** – The smallest significant unit of sound in a language. Alphabetic characters roughly correspond to phonemes.
- **Asian languages alternate consonants and vowels in words (eg: origami)**
- **English language uses multiple consonants in the beginning and end of words**
- **Speech can be understood up to 250 wpm (normal is 180 wpm = 15 phonemes/s) fired without gaps between phonemes**
- **Morpheme** – Smallest significant unit of meaning in a word (eg: boys has two morphemes – boy and -s)
- **Content Morpheme** – A morpheme that carries the main semantic and referential content of a sentence. In English, morphemes are usually nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs.
- **Function Morpheme** – A morpheme that, while adding such content as time, mode, individuation, and evidentiality, also serves a grammatical purpose (eg: -s or the connecting words “and” or “if”)
- Content and function morphemes are analyzed differently by brain.
- **Rule of Syntax/Grammar** – The regular principles governing how words can be assembled into sentences.
  - Implicitly known psychological principles that organize language into something understandable
    - Not about “ain’t” or ending sentences with prepositions. These are ways language “should be”
- **Tree Diagram** – A geometric representation of the structure of a sentence. Its nodes are labeled with a phrase (eg: noun phrase) and word-class (eg: adjective) category names, and the descending branches indicate relationships among these categories.
- **Phase Structure Description** – A tree diagram or labeled bracketing that shows the hierarchical structure of a sentence.
- Function morphemes allow listener to organize sequence as a phrase structure.