

The Divine Origin and Purpose of Language: Foundations for Christian Language Education

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the theological foundations of language by critically engaging with three influential linguistic theories: Ferdinand de Saussure's arbitrariness of the sign, Noam Chomsky's universal grammar, and Steven Pinker's evolutionary perspective. While these frameworks provide valuable insights, they remain limited within sociological, cognitive, or biological paradigms. Employing a qualitative research design with a conceptual and interdisciplinary approach, this study evaluates the limitations of secular linguistics through the lens of biblical theology. By conducting a thematic and grammatical exegesis of the *Logos* in John 1:1 and the *Memra* tradition in the Aramaic Targums, the paper situates language within the Trinitarian reality and the *imago Dei*, affirming it as both a divine gift and a medium of truth. Furthermore, the study analyzes the historical-theological significance of Babel and Pentecost to demonstrate God's sovereign role in linguistic diversity and unity. Synthesizing these findings, the article proposes a "Redemptive Teaching" framework for Christian education, arguing that language instruction should nurture moral discernment and transcendent purpose alongside technical mastery. By integrating a biblical worldview into pedagogy, this study contributes to the dialogue between theology and linguistics, offering a distinct perspective on the divine origin and function of language in education.

Keywords: Language Pedagogy; Theological Linguistics; Christian Education; Faith Integration; Biblical Theology

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INTRODUCTION

According to Saussure (2011), the link between word and meaning is just arbitrary, it implies all the meaning of the word is just a conventional agreement. In brief, people call "dog" as a dog because there is agreement among society. In other words, the existence of language is just because a human system shaped by social agreement and practices and language is neither biologically determined nor divinely imposed, but it evolves historically and socially. As it is a social product, it develops historically with meaning shifting over time and new emerging societies change. Thus, according to Saussure, language is a dynamic and evolving construct that reflects the continuous interplay between society, history, and human interaction."

On the other hand, Chomsky (1995) argues that language is not merely social product as every human born with cognitive capacity of generative rules. The capacity of generative rules enables them to comprehend and

produce an infinite number of utterances. This shows that every human has a faculty as specialized mental structure cause language acquisition possible. By this idea, Chomsky (1995) introduces his own theory called universal grammar as set of universal principles shared by all human languages. This theory explains how a finite set of rules can produce infinite number of sentences. Within the framework of Universal Grammar (UG), Chomsky argues that all languages share a set of basic universal categories, even though their surface forms may differ greatly. For instance, verbs and nouns are present in every language, although their shapes are not always identical. Adjectives, on the other hand, appear as a separate class in many languages, yet in some cases their function can be fulfilled by verbs or nouns. This universality is what enables humans to acquire language and makes it possible for one language to be translated into another. However, although Chomsky believes in an innate “universal grammar” but according to Chomsky (1995) universal grammar is simply a biological process of the brain as the product of human evolution.

In line with Chomsky’s ideas, Pinker (2007) argues that language is more than just a social construct rather it shapes through evolution process. According to Pinker (2007), human have innate faculty to produce languages because they have instinct to survive and adapt with situation. This is in accordance with the theory of evolution, which states that every biological process is the result of the adaptation of living organisms. Pinker (2007) compares human with other species, just as bird are born with the instinct to sing and spider with the instinct to weave webs, human are born with an innate ability to acquire language. This framework positions language as both a cognitive faculty and an evolutionary adaption that is developed to enhance human survival through cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and forward planning.

However, if language were nothing more than social convention or the product of evolution, how could it contain a transcendent dimension that surpasses biological function? If it were the product of adaption process, why would not any species possess the same capacity? Moreover, recent research shows that human beings are not limited to produce utterance for exchanging information only but are also capable of creating meaning, truth, and values through language (Hirmer et al., 2022; Jaszczolt, 2021; Angermuller, 2018; Shah, 2023). This suggests that language cannot be reduced to mere social agreement or evolutionary instinct, but must be understood as something deeper that reflects the unique nature of humanity.

Furthermore, Isaac, Gwunireama, & Ogan (2021) argue that language and morality are linked and cannot be separated as morality is expressed and carried through languages. In other words, through language, human beings do not merely grasp the lexical meaning of a word, but also discern the moral weight of goodness and the ethical consequences of speech. Through language, people recognize which words carry the power to harm and which words can nurture life and community. Through language, humanity forges the foundations of civilization, giving birth to law, human rights, and education. All of these arise because of language itself a gift bestowed directly by God, who is also a speaking Being.

In this paper, the writer argues that secular explanations about language will always remain insufficient, as they fail to account for the ultimate source and authority of meaning. The limitations of viewing language merely as social convention or evolutionary instinct point us to a deeper foundation, which shows that only the Bible as the absolute truth can adequately explain the origin, purpose, and enduring meaning of language.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a conceptual and interdisciplinary approach that integrates linguistic theory with biblical theology. The first stage involves a critical theoretical analysis of secular

linguistic frameworks, specifically evaluating Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism, Noam Chomsky's innatism, and Steven Pinker's evolutionary psychology. This process is designed to identify the limitations of these paradigms in addressing the transcendent dimensions of language that extend beyond mere sociological and biological functions.

Building upon this critique, the second stage conducts a biblical-exegetical study through a thematic and grammatical analysis of key historical texts. Primary focus is given to the concept of the *Logos* in John 1:1 and the *Memra* tradition in the *Targum Neofiti* by examining the original Greek and Aramaic linguistic structures. This analysis serves to establish a robust theological foundation for language as a reflection of the *imago Dei* and a manifestation of divine communication.

The final stage of the methodology consists of synthesis and pedagogical application, where findings from both the linguistic and theological analyses are integrated to formulate a "Redemptive Teaching" framework. This stage translates abstract theological concepts into concrete pedagogical implications for Christian language education. The focus is directed toward developing instructional models that transcend technical mastery such as form and meaning to emphasize language usage that carries moral weight and transcendent purpose.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Foundation of Language Acquisition

Language is not something created as the language is God himself (Poythress, 2009; Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.11.20, p. 413; Frame, 2010). John 1:1 states that in the beginning was the word, and everything is created by the word (John 1:3). Frame (2010) states that God's personal communication is God's word that carry His own presence and power. According to Poythress (2009) language is a reflection of trinity as the father is the speaker, the son is the word, and the spirit is the one that makes Word present. In other words, humans have capacity to acquire language is not because of evolution process but because they are created in the image of God. This perspective gains significance when John 1:1 is set in relation to Genesis 1, as both texts portray the Word as fundamental being to creation and communication among divines.

John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ (in the beginning) ἦν (was) ὁ λόγος (the word) καὶ (and) ὁ λόγος (the word) ἦν (was) πρὸς (with) τὸν θεόν (the God), καὶ (and) θεὸς (God) ἦν (was) ὁ λόγος (the word). (Jn. 1:1 BGT)

The Greek text shows that there are two persons in the eternity. The use of ὁ λόγος in the nominative singular form and τὸν θεόν in the accusative singular form, together both marked with the article shows that they are two different persons. The usage of πρὸς as preposition describes the relation one to another. In the following clause, however, θεὸς appears without the article ὁ. This omission in the second clause indicates that the term is being used in a qualitative way instead of referring to a separate person. It highlights that ὁ λόγος has the divine nature as ὁ θεὸς have (Wallace, 1996, p. 269). Essentially, the construction makes clear that the Logos is truly and fully divine.

In conclusion, the passage presents two persons who are distinct persons yet equally divine, united in essence and eternally related to one another. Such understanding directly resists the view of Sabellianism which argues that the father and the son is one single individual. Moreover, it also rejects the view of Arianism which

states that \acute{o} $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ was created and a lesser divine being. Instead, the text affirms both distinction in person and equality in nature that provides the foundation for the doctrine of the trinity and human's language acquisition.

Although at the first sight this may appear allegorical, even some scholars argue that John's concept of Logos is a similar concept to Stoic or Philonic concept of logos (Pelter, 2019). However, it is clear that John draws this idea from Genesis 1, which begins with the declaration, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Calvin, *Commentaries on the Gospel of John*; Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; Guzik, 2016). In the narrative, God creates all the things in universe through the Word, God speaks and light comes into being; God speaks again and the cosmos takes shape. It is in accordance with John 1:3 that states that all the things are created through the word. In other words, in this context, John is echoing Genesis 1.

There is a Jewish interpretation that aligns with John's thought, namely that the Word is not merely speech but a divine being. This tradition derives from the Targum Neofiti, in which creation is consistently carried out through the *Memra* (word) of the Lord (Wrobel, 2016;). For instance, "For example, in the Targum Neofiti, in Genesis 1:3 it is stated:

וַאֲמַר (and said)
 מִימְרָא (the *Memra* / Word)
 דִּיּוּי (of the Lord)
 יְהִי (let there be)
 נְהוֹר (light)
 וְהָיָה (and there was)
 נְהוֹר (light)
 בְּמִימְרָא (by His *Memra* / Word) "And the *Memra* of the Lord said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light by His *Memra*."

This text shows that the *Memra* is not presented as mere linguistic device for God's speech but the active manifestation of the presence of God and power. Creation itself takes place through the *Memra*, which points to John's prologue, where the Logos is revealed as Christ (John 1:1–3). Moreover, the *Memra* serves not only as the Creator but also as the manifestation of God within all of creation. For instance, in Targum Neofiti on Genesis 3:8, the text states:

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ (and they heard)
 הַיָּת (the)
 קוֹל (voice)
 מִימְרָא (the *Memra* / Word)
 דִּיּוּי (of the Lord)
 אֱלֹהִים (God)
 מְתַהַלֵּךְ (walking)
 בְּגַן (in the midst of)
 הַגִּנָּתָא (the garden)

"And they heard the voice of the *Memra* of the Lord God walking in the garden."

This phrasing strikingly parallels to the Hebrew קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מְתַהַלֵּךְ בְּגַן (qol YHWH 'ēlōhîm mithallēk b'gān, "the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden," Gen 3:8), but the Targum intentionally replaces the divine name with *Memra*. In other words, The *Memra* functions as the way God makes Himself present, so that people can encounter Him within creation. Besides, The *Memra* appears in a range of theophanic actions: creating,

saving, speaking, revealing, judging, and affirming the covenant. In Exodus 29:43–46, the Targum Neofiti renders God’s words as, ‘And I my *Memra* will meet the children of Israel there.’ By inserting the *Memra* into the text, the Targum emphasizes that Israel’s encounter with God is mediated through His *Memra*. This mediation causes His presence tangible within the sanctuary.

Although the targum do not carry the same canonical authority as the Masoretic text, second temple Judaism still regards the Targums as valuable interpretive traditions (Brooke, 2005). In the context of synagogue worship after the exile, the presence of the targum was to make the Torah understandable to an Aramaic-speaking audience. In this way, they often function as early commentary, preserving theological and exegetical insights that illuminate how Scripture was received and interpreted in its formative stages. In other words, Targum Neofiti is a valuable source for understanding how Second Temple Judaism conceived of God and the *Memra* (the Word).

As Targum Neofiti, in particular reflects Palestinian Judaism of the first century, the text is valuable as the witness of how Jewish community comprehended the text and the nature of God’s interaction with the world. Therefore, although not canonical, the targums carry weight as windows into the living interpretation of Scripture in the time closest to the New Testament. Based on this explanation, the usage of *Memra* in targum provides a conceptual bridge between the Old Testament account of God’s creative being and relation into human being, and the New Testament identification of Jesus as $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ who was the creator and has been exist from the eternity. In both creation and covenantal history, the *memra* is not merely a language of speech but a personal divine self-revelation.

Based on this understanding, language is not something created; rather, it must be understood as existing together with God from eternity. In other words, language is an integral part of God and consequently, human beings whom created in the image and likeness of God possess the capacity for language acquisition (Dorobantu, 2022; Haselton, 2018). In this light, Chomsky’s theory of universal grammar finds deeper explanation that the universality of linguistic capacity is not the product of evolution. Rather it is the result of God’s creative design in making humans bearers of His image.

Since human is created in the image of God, human does not only inherit the structural capacity for grammar but also the human conscience, the pursuit of meaning in life, and the moral order embedded within the human existence (Hoekema, 1986; Bavinck 2019). There is no explanation that fully accounts for how humans possess these qualities other than the fact that they are created in the image and likeness of God. Chomsky’s (1995 proposal of a “universal grammar” highlights the innate linguistic capacity of enabling humans for language acquisition. However, this very universality points beyond mere biological adaptation, suggesting a design in which humans are inherently communicative and oriented toward truth and meaning. Besides, Saussure’s claim about the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign rightly highlights that words are based on social convention. Yet across cultures and languages, humans consistently use these signs to express ideas such as justice, love, and transcendence. These concepts, however, cannot be fully reduced to mere arbitrary conventions.

In conclusion, although each linguistic system possesses its own lexicon and structural particularities, they all reflect values and meanings that go beyond linguistic differences. These meanings are not confined to lexical or semantic content but extend to fundamental questions of life such as truth, morality and purpose. In this sense, people should understand language as not merely as a social product or evolutionary process but as a mirror of the creator’s communicative nature allowing humanity to engage with realities that go beyond the limits of human conventions.

Sovereignty of God towards language

Language does not merely evolve within the framework of human society; God also sovereignly rules over language. The story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 describes humans' attempt to build a city and a tower that would reach the heaven. They aim to make a name for themselves and avoid being scattered. This action stands in opposition to God's explicit command for humanity to populate the earth (Genesis 1:28). Some people argue that this event was not historical rather a fictional narrative to teach moral spiritual lesson as there is no archaeological evidence of this ancient tower.

However, although text uses the phrase ראש בשמים (*rosh bashamayim*, "its top in the heavens"), which many readers take simply as a reference to height, according to the context of Mesopotamian culture, this expression resonates with the context of Ziggurat (Oshima, 2022). Ziggurat itself stands for a temple considered as a bridge between earth and heaven in ancient near east culture. This indicates that the endeavour was not merely an architectural undertaking, but also carried profound religious and political significance of humanity that aimed to centralize authority and approach the divine on their own terms. It also explains why no massive "tower" has been discovered archaeologically, as it was **not** a modern skyscraper but a monumental religious structure.

In response, God acted decisively by confusing their language so that they could no longer understand one another. The resulting miscommunication forced them to abandon the project and scatter across the earth. This narrative makes it clear that the diversity of languages is not a random social development. Rather it is an intentional act of God, revealing His sovereignty over the origin and dispersion of human speech.

As Van Til (1955) argues, only the biblical worldview provides a coherent explanation for reality, including the very possibility of communication. If language merely a human invention or the evolutionary products, it is impossible to find order, meaning, and universality in language. Scripture, however, shows that language originates from the self-revealing God who created human to communicate truth and accomplish His purposes in history. According to Van Til, all human reasons should depend on God's special revelation, and attempts to use language apart from Him will ultimately fail. The Babel story itself illustrates this truth that human's pride which seeks independence for God leads into confusion. Besides, true understanding and unity are found only in submission to His Word.

God's sovereignty over language is not limited to judgment at Babel, it is also shown in redemption, especially at Pentecost. Bruce (1988) notes that Luke presents Pentecost as a reversal of Babel. Where God once scattered humanity through the confusion of languages, at Pentecost He gathered people from many nations, enabling them to hear the gospel in their own tongues. Here, the very medium that once divided humanity becomes the tool for proclaiming the unity of the Spirit in Christ.

Keener (1993) emphasizes that Pentecost was both linguistic and missional. Linguistically, the disciples spoke in foreign languages they had never learned. Missionally, this miracle demonstrated that the good news of Christ was not limited to a single ethnic group or language but was meant for all nations. The Spirit's work at Pentecost was not a private ecstatic experience; it was the first public declaration of the gospel's universal reach.

This interpretation is reinforced by Marshall (1980) and Stott (1990), who argue that the tongues spoken at Pentecost were intelligible human languages, not incoherent or uncontrollable speech. The focus was on comprehension: "each one heard them speaking in his own language" (Acts 2:6). Pentecost was about clear communication, not confusion; understanding, not chaos. The gift of tongues served the mission of the church by making Christ's message immediately accessible to people from every nation in Jerusalem.

The contrast between Babel and Pentecost highlights God's sovereignty over every aspect of language including its sounds, vocabulary, grammar, and meaning. Language is not simply a human invention or evolutionary by product as it is a divine instrument, designed and governed by God to fulfil His redemptive purposes in history.

Sovereignty of God toward History

God is sovereign towards history (Daniel 2:21), and the history has shown the consistency between the bible's prophecies and the events that have taken place. The facts that Israel will be in exile had been prophesied by Isaiah before it took place (Isaiah 39:6-7), and even the long seventy-year period of exile had been told by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29:10). The kingdoms that reigned after Babel have also been prophesied by Daniel (Dan 2:31-45). Those prophecies demonstrate the sovereignty of God toward history.

In general, the language used as a lingua franca depends on the nations that hold power. If God is the one who gives power over country (Daniel 2:21), then God is sovereign towards all the lingua franca that is used in all period. Started from Babylon, for example, rose to power under God's allowance, even exercising authority over God's chosen nation. The Israelites were put into exile for seventy years because of their neglect of the sabbatical cycles and their persistent idolatry (Jeremiah 25:11-12). During this time, God's temple was destroyed, sacred vessels were repurposed for the royal palace, and the people of Judah endured a long journey into captivity. Over time, Babylon's political and cultural influence expanded across Mesopotamia, encompassing key trade routes, cities, and surrounding nations. As a result, Babylonian administration and language naturally became central tools for communication in the region.

In accordance with the rise of Babylon prominence, Aramaic gradually emerged as a common language throughout the Ancient near East. Even during the Persian period, Aramaic was still widely used. The widespread use of Aramaic allowed communication across diverse people and helped preserve part of the Bible, such as Daniel and Ezra, in that language. Although, the exile was a judgment act, at the end it turned into means of divine providence.

As later, it equipped God's people with a shared language that later enabled His Word to cross cultural and national boundaries.

Although Babylon's empire seemed so strong but their empire did not last forever as the Persian empire eventually conquered it. Daniel had already prophesied this before Babylon eventually fell into the hands of Darius the Mede of Persia (Daniel 2:31-38; Daniel 2:25-31). Under Cyrus the great, the Israelites were allowed to return to their homeland, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy declared centuries earlier (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). Even in the prophecy, the name Cyrus was mentioned. Even though, Aramaic continued to function as the common language across the Near-east, but still this fact shows God's sovereign control towards history. God raises and directs empires to accomplish His redemptive plans, including the preservation and restoration of His people.

The Persian Empire itself eventually fell to Alexander the Great, who brought Persian territories under Greek control. Alexander, a student of Aristotle, envisioned a unified world under Hellenistic culture. The vision is about spreading Greek's language, culture and custom across the eastern Mediterranean. His conquest carried Greek influence far beyond its original homeland. Even after Rome replaced Greece as the dominant power, Greek culture remained highly influential. It still continued to shape philosophy, literature and system of administration. Even during the Roman empire, Greek was still widely used in the eastern Rome.

By the time of Ptolemy's reign in Egypt, many Jews in Alexandria were not able to speak Hebrew anymore (Shaye, 1999; Marthen, 1974). Recognizing this, Ptolemy commissioned the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. Later the translation is known as Septuagint that providentially prepared the way for the gospel. Since it was translated to the language that was widely used that time, the Scriptures were now accessible in a widely understood language. It later helped the spread of the New Testament in Koine Greek to both Jews and Gentiles across the Hellenistic world.

After Greece's influence waned, Rome rose to power, establishing Latin as the language of administration and law. Latin endured for centuries in governance, theology, and science. Even it leaves a lasting imprint on technical terms still used today. Although the Roman empire was strong, it fell in AD 476 under Germanic invasion. Many people blamed Christianity that time, because many people converted, and they did not offer sacrifices to their former gods anymore. There were many people argue that this fact was the cause of Roman's fall. This situation prompted Augustine to write *The City of God*, which is a monumental theological work defending the Christian faith and contrasting the transient nature of earthly cities with the eternal city of God (Agustinus, 2003, Prologue, Book I).

In fact, these shifts in power and language were not coincidences but part of God's providential plan. Daniel, living in Babylon, had already foreseen this centuries earlier. In King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue made of different metals, Daniel interpreted each part as representing successive kingdoms: the head of gold symbolized Babylon, the chest and arms of silver represented the Medo-Persian Empire, the belly and thighs of bronze symbolized the Greek Empire under Alexander, the legs of iron represented Rome, and the feet partly of iron and clay pointed to a divided kingdom in the future. Daniel emphasized that while these earthly empires rise and fall, God's final kingdom would never be destroyed (Dan. 2:31–45).

Even afterwards, Latin, which had once been the international language, became a dead language in which no one acquired it as a mother tongue anymore. This shows that God is truly sovereign over every language. Therefore, the study of language should not focus merely on oneself, but on God's purpose for His Kingdom.

Language Teaching Purposes

Based on the previous discussion, language learning is not merely about acquiring vocabulary and mastering grammatical structures but also serves as means to convey truth, morality and divine purpose in carrying out the work of God's kingdom. Hence, language learning cannot be reduced to technical mastery alone. Nowadays, many teachers emphasize grammar, ensuring that students can arrange words correctly following established rules. This focus is essential for without proper grammar; messages cannot be clearly communicated. Yet if language education stops here, it reduces the study of language to mere form and fails to recognize its deeper significance. In fact, language is not only technical skill for communication, but it is also a core expression of humanity's distinct beings as they are created in God's image.

Other teachers emphasize lexical competence in order to help students acquire a wide vocabulary so that the meaning can be expressed more precise. A rich lexicon indeed enables the speakers both to convey nuance and articulate ideas more fully. However, even an extensive vocabulary remains insufficient if language learning is confined to exchange information.

Since language reflects the communicative nature of God, its purpose extends beyond grammar and vocabulary. Language is not only a tool for structuring sentences or expressing ideas, but also the medium through

which deeper realities are revealed. Therefore, language education must move beyond mechanics and address the fundamental questions of life such as truth, morality, and purpose.

Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, language learning involves three essential dimensions: form, meaning, and usage (2016). Form refers to the structural properties of language such as grammar, morphology, and phonology. In this sense, students are trained to recognize and produce correct word forms, verb conjugations, and sentence patterns. For example, distinguishing between *he walks* and *he walked* requires mastering the grammatical rules of tense. Such attention to form is crucial, for without structure, communication collapses into confusion. Meaning points to the semantic content carried by those forms. Language is not only about arranging words correctly, but about attaching them to concepts, ideas, and realities. A learner who acquires the word *justice* does more than memorize a sound or sequence of letters rather they gain access to a powerful concept that organizes human thought and social life. Expanding vocabulary, therefore, enlarges one's capacity to convey nuance, articulate values, and engage in deeper reflection.

However, language teaching often struggles to move into the third dimension: usage, which focuses on how forms and meanings function within real discourse. Usage is about appropriateness knowing not only *what* to say but also *when, how, and why* to say it in a given social, cultural, or rhetorical context. This is why proficiency tests such as TOEFL or IELTS emphasize discourse-level tasks: writing essays, interpreting texts, or engaging in spoken interactions. These tasks recognize that authentic communication takes place within contexts where meaning must be negotiated and conveyed effectively.

The teacher, therefore, should not only teach definitions and structures, but also train students to use language in discourse settings that mirror real-life communication. However, if language education stops at this level, then what Steven Pinker describes becomes sufficient: language is reduced to an evolutionary instinct for survival, comparable to birds singing or spiders spinning webs. Likewise, Ferdinand de Saussure's view holds true, that language is nothing more than a social construct shaped by convention and agreement. In both cases, language is confined to the realm of biological function or social utility.

Yet neither perspective can account for the universal dimensions of meaning truth, morality, and purpose that transcend survival and convention. Language education, therefore, must not end with grammar, vocabulary, and discourse performance, but must touch upon these deeper realities. Only then does language learning reflect humanity's true nature as created in the image of God, designed not merely to exchange information but to participate in and communicate transcendent meaning.

Redemptive Teaching

According to language education theorists such as H. Douglas Brown and Diane Larsen-Freeman, language should not be taught in isolation but always embedded within meaningful contexts (2015). Grammar and vocabulary, while essential, gain their real significance when connected to themes that reflect authentic situations and experiences.

On this basis, teachers are encouraged to design thematic units of learning, so that students practice grammar and lexical items within a coherent context. For example, instead of teaching the past tense merely as a set of rules, a teacher might frame the lesson around the theme of *personal testimony* or *life stories*. Within this theme, students not only practice verb conjugations but also learn to narrate meaningful experiences, articulate values, and reflect on truths drawn from life.

Through such thematic approaches, grammar and vocabulary cease to be abstract exercises and become vehicles for engaging with reality. More importantly, these themes provide natural entry points for communicating truth, values, and life purpose. For instance, a theme such as *justice* can integrate lexical items related to fairness, right, and law, while also inviting reflection on moral responsibility. A theme like *creation and environment* can incorporate descriptive grammar and ecological vocabulary, while pointing to humanity's role as stewards of God's creation. In this way, language learning becomes both linguistically effective and spiritually formative.

Teaching Vocabulary

When teaching vocabulary, many teachers limit themselves to providing dictionary definitions or word-for-word equivalents. While such an approach is helpful at a basic level, it often leaves students without the ability to understand words in their pragmatic dimension how meaning shifts depending on context, speaker intention, and discourse setting (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2005). Vocabulary is not merely a static list of items to be memorized but a dynamic resource that acquires nuance and depth as it is situated within particular communicative acts. For example, the word *light* may refer literally to physical illumination, metaphorically to knowledge or moral goodness, or idiomatically within particular expressions; a dictionary entry alone cannot capture these layers.

Contextual learning, therefore, moves beyond definitions by training students to recognize such variations and to discern how meaning functions in real communication. This includes understanding connotation, register, and cultural associations, all of which enable learners to employ vocabulary not only accurately but also appropriately. Ultimately, vocabulary instruction that is embedded in discourse empowers learners to use language as a living instrument of interaction rather than as an abstract system of isolated terms.

Yet the task of a Christian educator cannot stop at pragmatics alone. To remain only at the level of using words in social situations risks reducing language to nothing more than a human convention. Teaching must go further, helping students see that words carry meaning because they are rooted in reality as God has created it. Thus, vocabulary should not be treated as neutral or arbitrary, but understood in light of the absolute truth revealed in God's Word. This does not imply forcing every term into a narrowly religious framework, but rather recognizing that every word belongs to the created order and gains its fullest meaning when connected to God's design.

As previously emphasized, God is sovereign not only over the major historical events but also over the smallest elements of language its sounds, its words, and its structures. Language does not exist independently of Him, nor are words simply containers that human societies can shape at will. Instead, they must be understood as part of a reality that God has ordered and sustained. In this way, the very act of defining vocabulary becomes more than a technical task; it becomes an opportunity to align words with truth, ensuring that language points beyond human convention to the deeper reality established by the Creator.

This reorientation of vocabulary is not a matter of adding religious connotations to ordinary words, but of uncovering their deepest meaning in relation to God's design. Words, when left to human convention alone, can easily be narrowed, distorted, or emptied of their intended depth. However, by grounding them in the truth of Scripture, teachers help students see that language is not only a tool for communication but also a lens for interpreting reality as God has ordered it. For instance:

Marriage should not be reduced to a social contract or romantic arrangement, but defined biblically as a covenantal union between a man and a woman, pointing to the mystery of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31–32). Culture should not be understood merely as human expression or tradition, but as the arena in which humanity exercises its God-given mandate to cultivate creation, though always distorted by sin and in need of redemption.

Freedom is not simply the ability to do whatever one wishes, but the biblical reality of being liberated from sin to live in obedience to God (John 8:36; Gal. 5:13). Human identity is not defined by self-determination or social categories, but by being created in the image of God and renewed in Christ (Gen. 1:27; Col. 3:10). Life should not be regarded as a matter of personal choice or utilitarian calculation, but as a sacred gift from God, with every human being born or unborn bearing His image and therefore deserving protection and dignity (Ps. 139:13–16; Jer. 1:5). By reframing vocabulary in this way, language teaching becomes an avenue for discipleship. Students are not only equipped to use words accurately in context but also trained to interpret and employ them according to God’s truth, resisting relativistic or secular redefinitions. Thus, every lexical choice becomes a participation in bearing witness to the absolute reality revealed in Scripture.

Teaching Grammar

When grammar is taught in meaningful contexts, learners are more cognitively able to process and internalize its patterns than if it were presented in isolation. As language acquisition experts such as Diane Larsen-Freeman (2015) have noted, grammar is best understood not merely as a set of abstract rules, but as a dynamic system whose function becomes clear in authentic contexts of use.

Yet, for Christian educators, grammar must also be seen in light of God’s design. As Noam Chomsky has observed, every human being possesses a “universal grammar,” an innate capacity to generate countless combinations of words. From a biblical perspective, this capacity does not arise from evolutionary accident, but from humanity’s creation in the image and likeness of God. Human beings are endowed with the ability to structure and create language because they reflect the Creator who communicates.

Moreover, the very possibility of arranging words meaningfully rests on the reality of God’s creation. A word such as *sky* can be defined only because the sky exists, and it exists as God’s handiwork. In the same way, the categories of grammar reflect the created order. The distinction between singular and plural, or between countable and uncountable nouns, does not arise from human invention but from the nature of things as God has made them. Human beings do not create these categories; they merely recognize and describe them through grammatical forms.

Even the system of tenses rests on this same foundation. The ability to speak of past, present, and future presupposes that God has placed human beings within the framework of time. Without the reality of time, there would be no present, perfect or future tense; without the created order, there would be no referents for grammar to describe. Thus, every grammatical structure ultimately bears witness to God’s creative sovereignty.

Understanding this truth transforms the purpose of language learning. Students learn not merely for personal advancement or practical communication, but to glorify God through their use of language. Language becomes a tool for reinterpreting and redefining creation according to God’s revelation, aligning every act of speaking, writing, and understanding with the Creator’s truth.

Teaching skills

According to language acquisition experts such as Jeremy Harmer (2007) and Marianne Celce-Murcia (2001), language learning can be categorized into receptive and productive skills. Receptive skills include reading and listening, which involve understanding and interpreting language input. Productive skills, on the other hand, consist of writing and speaking, which require learners to generate and express language effectively. Besides, language can also be further classified into oral and written skills. Oral skills comprise speaking and listening,

focusing on verbal communication and comprehension. While, written skills, in contrast, include reading and writing, emphasizing comprehension and expression through text.

Based on these frameworks, language teaching involves four essential skills that learners must develop which are reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Mastery of all four dimensions ensures that students can both understand and produce language in meaningful context in appropriate ways.



In Christian education, the context and content should be grounded in *true knowledge*, namely biblical truth. This means that language learning is not limited to acquiring communicative skills but is also directed toward interpreting and evaluating life phenomena in light of God's Word. For example, students may analyse contemporary issues such as divorce, marriage, or the impact of technology. In such tasks, learners are encouraged to compare worldly perspectives with biblical principles, leading them to articulate responses that reflect true knowledge.

In this process, grammar and vocabulary play a crucial role. A solid grasp of grammar allows students to comprehend the intended meaning of texts, whether spoken or written, while an extensive vocabulary equips them to capture nuances and key concepts. These foundational elements enable learners not only to understand audio or written input more accurately but also to respond sharply and thoughtfully through writing and speaking. Thus, the four skills reading, listening, writing, and speaking become tools through which biblical truth is both received and expressed in meaningful ways.

CONCLUSION

Saussure's theory reduces language to arbitrary signs, Chomsky explains it as a universal grammar rooted in biology, and Pinker' frames it as evolutionary instinct. Yet each view ultimately falls short. Language is not the product of convention, biology, or adaptation; it is a divine attribute that precedes creation itself. Because humanity is made in the image of the speaking God, they share His communicative capacity. Through language, civilizations are built, law and justice are established, and human rights and education arise. Thus, language education must not remain mechanical, confined to grammar and vocabulary, but must integrate ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions, showing that every word is bound to truth and morality. Theological analysis suggests that language can be understood as a sacred gift, serving both societal communication and as a reflection of God's character.

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