Typical view of language:

**LEXICAL FOCUS**
1. centers on vocabulary; words = language. This focus helps enable the following:
   a. primitive languages exist: they have smaller vocabulary
   b. language (i.e., words) is learned
   c. animals can learn language
   d. animals have languages

**FOCUS ON UNSYSTEMATIC COMPONENTS**
2. systematic and unsystematic components not distinguished (systematic component is largely unrecognized)
3. focus on slang and exceptions
   a. the rules are background and most people don’t notice them
4. language not distinguished from nonverbal communication
   a. facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, hand gestures are “nonverbal”
5. this plus lack of distinction between systematic and unsystematic makes it seem as if animals can have language

**LEARNING**
6. language is learned like anything else, often via imitation of a parent or sib. The “imitation game”: “This is a ball. Say ball.”
7. reinforcement and social learning (vicarious reinforcement) are important
   a. no distinction between WHAT to say and HOW to say it. Reinforcement may play a role in the first more than the second.
8. repetition and association are considered important
9. focus on need to be tutored
10. many people assume that anything that develops is learned (but Chomsky compares language acquisition to physical growth).

**OTHER**
11. syntax is assumed to be just a matter of stringing words together – like beads on a string
   a. many believe syntax is first learned in school
12. Innate aspects are reserved for body parts, like vocal cords, ears, tongue (peripherals).
13. the difference between human language and animal communication is just one of complexity
   a. human language and animal communication are sometimes thought to be the same because they have the same goal: communication. This is a “functional” view. But Chomsky focuses on structure.
14. most people don’t distinguish between the expressive aspects (vocal/tone) of speech and the propositional aspects. Chomsky believes these two are due to separate “organs” in the brain (supported by studies of brain damage).