Universality and equality

How many words for snow are there in Eskimo?

Franz Boas

Just as English uses derived terms for a variety of forms of water
   (liquid, lake, river, brook, rain, dew, wave, foam)
that might be formed by derivational morphology from a single root meaning 'water' in some other language,

so Eskimo uses the apparently distinct roots *aput* 'snow on the ground', *gana* 'falling snow', *piqsirpoq* 'drifting snow', and *qimuqsuq* 'a snow drift'.

*(1911)*

Mohawk “we”

you and I: teni
he/she and I: iakeni
they and I: iakwa

you (all) and I: tewa

3000 or so speakers, in USA (mainly New York) and Canada (mainly Quebec and Ontario)

Mid-Grand Valley Dani verbs & colors

Two basic color terms
light: modla    dark: mili

Thousands of inflected forms for each verb

50 000 speakers in 1993, Papua New Guinea
Creolization

Tok Pisin
120 000 native speakers, 50 000 monolinguals in 2003, Papua New Guinea

19th century pidgin

Boatswain gammon me.
"The boatswain lied to me."

20th century creole

subject marking element i (from English "he")

Wanpela man i no kam.
"One person didn't come."

verbs take a suffix im when they are transitive (i.e. have a direct object). (from English him)

Mi no wok-im wanpela samting.
"I didn't do anything."

Putim mi lo dispela.
“Put me on this one” (reserving flight)
Children's linguistic creativity

bringed
goed
foots
mouses

This is a wug.

Now there are two of them.

There are two ____.
Language localization

Wernicke's area - near the primary auditory cortex

Broca's area - near the motor and premotor cortexes
Damage to Wernicke's area results in

**Wernicke's aphasia:**

*fluent but nonsensical speech.*

**Examiner.** What kind of work have you done?

-- We, the kids, all of us, and I, we were working for a long time in the... You know... it's the kind of space, I mean place rear to the spedawn...

**In sign language speakers, damage to Wernicke's area**

leads to *fluent but nonsensical signing*

And there's one (way down at the end). The man walked over to see the (disconnected), an extension of the (earth) room. It's there for the man (can live) a roof and light with shades to (keep pulling down).
Damage to Broca’s area results in **Broca's aphasia**:

*disfluent, stilted, labored speech consisting mostly of “keywords” with little grammar.*

Users of sign language with damage to Broca’s area have trouble articulating signs and cannot communicate fluently.

**M.E.** Cinderella...poor...um 'dopted her...scrubbed floor, um, tidy...poor, um...'dopted...Si-sisters and mother...ball. Ball, prince um, shoe...

**Examiner** Keep going.

**M.E.** Scrubbed and uh washed and un...tidy, uh, sisters and mother, prince, no, prince, yes. Cinderella hooked prince. (Laughs.) Um, um, shoes, um, twelve o'clock ball, finished.
Thirty years ago, Nicaragua had no sign language. Deaf people struggled to communicate with their families, and with each other.

Today, Nicaragua has a rich, developed sign language, learned easily by young deaf children when they meet other deaf people who sign. Where did this language come from?

Nicaraguan Sign Language was not imported from some other country. It was not invented by teachers or parents, or even deaf adults.

The language arose naturally, among a generation of young Nicaraguans who needed to communicate. Nicaraguan Sign Language came from the same place that all languages came from – human minds, trying to connect with other human minds.
Before 1970 – separate “home sign” systems in each person
1977 – school established
1983 – community of over 400 students

- Spanish and lipreading taught with zero success
- Children created a **pidgin**
  - combining elements of their home-sign systems

- June 1986 – Nicaragua Ministry of Education contacted Judy Kegl
  - Kegl and other researchers noticed that
    - **the young children had taken**
      - the pidgin-like form of the older children
      - to a higher level of complexity, with verb agreement &c.

This more complex language is **Idioma de Señas de Nicaragua (ISN)**

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/07/2/l_072_04.html