

1: Language acquisition - Wikipedia

The Innateness Theory and Theories of Language Acquisition Sara Albornoz Gallegos Slideshare uses cookies to improve functionality and performance, and to provide you with relevant advertising. If you continue browsing the site, you agree to the use of cookies on this website.

Linguistic nativism[edit] Linguistic nativism is the theory that humans are born with some knowledge of language. One acquires a language not entirely through learning. Human language is complicated and is said to form one of the most complex areas of human cognition. Moreover, research has shown that language acquisition among children including the blind and the deaf occurs in ordered developmental stages. According to Noam Chomsky, [6] "The speed and precision of vocabulary acquisition leaves no real alternative to the conclusion that the child somehow has the concepts available before experience with language and is basically learning labels for concepts that are already a part of his or her conceptual apparatus. Moreover, in his work, *The Language Instinct*, Pinker argued that language in humans is a biological adaptation" language is hard-wired into our minds by evolution. The innateness hypothesis supports language nativism and several reasons and concepts have been proposed to support and explain this hypothesis. In his work, Chomsky introduced the idea of a language acquisition device LAD to account for the competence of humans in acquiring a language. The universal grammar UG that is also often credited to Chomsky was later introduced. Language acquisition device[edit] According to Chomsky, humans are born with a set of language learning tools referred to as the LAD. The LAD is an abstract part of the human mind which houses the ability for humans to acquire and produce language. The LAD then transforms these rules into basic grammar. Universal grammar[edit] In his argument for the existence of a LAD, Chomsky proposed that for a child to acquire a language, sufficient innate language-specific knowledge is needed. In this theory, it is suggested that all humans have a set of limited rules for grammar that are universal to all natural human languages. These rules are genetically wired into our brains and they can be altered in correspondence to the language children are exposed to. He argued that "properties of a generative grammar arise from an "innate" universal grammar". Since , the poverty of stimulus became increasingly integrated into the theory of generative grammar. Under positivity, they assert that children are only exposed to positive linguistic data. Moreover, there is lack in negative data that aids a child in identifying ungrammatical sentences that are unacceptable in the language. In addition, under degeneracy, it is stated that children are often exposed to linguistic data that are erroneous. This is supported by Zohari that states that in adult speech, erroneous utterances that include speech slips, ungrammatical sentences, incomplete sentences etc. However, despite the properties mentioned above, children would eventually be able to deliver a linguistic output that is similar to the target language within a relatively short amount of time. However, it is important to note that the argument that the poverty of stimulus supports the innateness hypothesis remains very controversial. Lenneberg expressed that age plays a salient role in the ability to acquire language. According to him, a child before the age of two will not sufficiently acquire language, while development of full native competence in a language must occur before the onset of puberty. This hypothesis is also said to explain why adults do not acquire languages as well as children. Evidence for the critical period hypothesis can be seen in the case of Genie. When discovered, she was without language. Genie was said to have right-hemisphere language, resembling other cases where language was acquired outside of the "critical period". Moreover, some saw the case of Genie as a support to the innateness hypothesis. When the LAD is not triggered during the critical period, the natural process of language acquisition cannot be reached. It has been argued that it does not support linguistic innateness. Some have asserted that there is at least a possible degree of first language acquisition beyond the critical period. Initially a pidgin sign language with simple grammar, there were large grammatical differences and variations across signers. Eventually, the pidgin became a full-fledged language like a creole as younger signers developed a significantly more grammatically structured and regular system [31] such as specific grammatical structures [32] Often, the differences in abilities between the younger and older students to use sign language are said to suggest evidence for a critical period. The spontaneity of the development of NSL

also shows that there is an innate element to the process of language learning. Other research has also indicated that any age effects depend largely on the opportunities for learning, learning situations and how significant the initial exposure is. They claim that sense and experience is the ultimate source of all concepts and knowledge. These data-driven theorists also support that children do not have linguistically-specific knowledge at birth. Language and grammar are only learned through exposure and accumulated experience. This is also called the "nurture" perspective as opposed to the "nature" perspective linguistic nativism. In fact, some would argue that "language structure" is created through language use. Arguments[edit] Contrastive analyses about the innateness hypothesis have been done by Jacek Fisiak in The fact that languages have similar properties is common and natural. Goodman also expressed that claims about language universals are dubious. He argues that it is not surprising that languages in the world will coincidentally have features in common. Over the years, many theories that are against language innateness have been developed to account for language acquisition. Many have championed that human beings learn language through experience with some leaning towards children being equipped with learning mechanisms while others suggesting that social situations or cognitive capacities can account for language learning. Bates and Elman summarised a research conducted by Saffran, Aslin and Newport [43] that supports that learning is "a purely inductive, statistically driven process". The results of the research highlight that language acquisition is a process of learning through statistical means. Moreover, it raises the possibility that infants possess experience-dependent mechanisms that allow for word segmentation and acquisition of other aspects of language. By empirically studying the developmental stages of child language acquisition, he argues that children have specific cognitive capacities at birth that promote growth in linguistic competence and specific interpersonal abilities that aid language learning. Geoffrey Sampson also supports that the "richness of the environment" plays a role in language acquisition. Therefore, he contends that a child is born with the ability to learn and this is through testing and guessing instead of the innate ability that nativists support.

2: Innateness hypothesis | Define Innateness hypothesis at www.enganchecubano.com

The innateness hypothesis is an expression coined by Hilary Putnam to refer to a linguistic theory of language acquisition which holds that at least some knowledge about language exists in humans at birth.

These arguments lean towards the "nurture" side of the argument: Since operant conditioning is contingent on reinforcement by rewards, a child would learn that a specific combination of sounds stands for a specific thing through repeated successful associations made between the two. Some empiricist theories of language acquisition include the statistical learning theory. Hockett of language acquisition, relational frame theory, functionalist linguistics, social interactionist theory, and usage-based language acquisition. Instead, children typically follow a pattern of using an irregular form of a word correctly, making errors later on, and eventually returning to the proper use of the word. For example, a child may correctly learn the word "gave" past tense of "give", and later on use the word "gived". Eventually, the child will typically go back to learning the correct word, "gave". Chomsky argued that if language were solely acquired through behavioral conditioning, children would not likely learn the proper use of a word and suddenly use the word incorrectly. Chomsky also rejected the term "learning", which Skinner used to claim that children "learn" language through operant conditioning. The language immersion school, operated by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, teaches the same curriculum as other American primary schools, but the Cherokee language is the medium of instruction from pre-school on up and students learn it as a first language. Such schools have proven instrumental in the preservation and perpetuation of the Cherokee language. A major debate in understanding language acquisition is how these capacities are picked up by infants from the linguistic input. Nativists such as Noam Chomsky have focused on the hugely complex nature of human grammars, the finiteness and ambiguity of the input that children receive, and the relatively limited cognitive abilities of an infant. From these characteristics, they conclude that the process of language acquisition in infants must be tightly constrained and guided by the biologically given characteristics of the human brain. Otherwise, they argue, it is extremely difficult to explain how children, within the first five years of life, routinely master the complex, largely tacit grammatical rules of their native language. In particular, there has been resistance to the possibility that human biology includes any form of specialization for language. This conflict is often referred to as the "nature and nurture" debate. Of course, most scholars acknowledge that certain aspects of language acquisition must result from the specific ways in which the human brain is "wired" a "nature" component, which accounts for the failure of non-human species to acquire human languages and that certain others are shaped by the particular language environment in which a person is raised a "nurture" component, which accounts for the fact that humans raised in different societies acquire different languages. The as-yet unresolved question is the extent to which the specific cognitive capacities in the "nature" component are also used outside of language.

Social interactionist theory Social interactionist theory is an explanation of language development emphasizing the role of social interaction between the developing child and linguistically knowledgeable adults. It is based largely on the socio-cultural theories of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky, and made prominent in the Western world by Jerome Bruner. Another key idea within the theory of social interactionism is that of the zone of proximal development. Briefly, this is a theoretical construct denoting the set of tasks a child is capable of performing with guidance, but not alone.

Relational frame theory[edit] Main article: Based upon the principles of Skinnerian behaviorism, RFT posits that children acquire language purely through interacting with the environment. RFT theorists introduced the concept of functional contextualism in language learning, which emphasizes the importance of predicting and influencing psychological events, such as thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, by focusing on manipulable variables in their context. Empirical studies supporting the predictions of RFT suggest that children learn language via a system of inherent reinforcements, challenging the view that language acquisition is based upon innate, language-specific cognitive capacities. According to these theories, neither nature nor nurture alone is sufficient to trigger language learning; both of these influences must work together in order to allow children to acquire a language. The proponents of these theories argue that general cognitive processes subserve language

acquisition and that the end result of these processes is language-specific phenomena, such as word learning and grammar acquisition. The findings of many empirical studies support the predictions of these theories, suggesting that language acquisition is a more complex process than many believe. In the s within the Principles and Parameters framework, this hypothesis was extended into a maturation-based Structure building model of child language regarding the acquisition of functional categories. In this model, children are seen as gradually building up more and more complex structures, with Lexical categories like noun and verb being acquired before Functional- syntactic categories like determiner and complementiser. One influential proposal to the origin of these errors is as follows: In Bare-Phrase structure Minimalist Program , since theory-internal considerations define the specifier position of an internal-merge projection phases vP and CP as the only type of host which could serve as potential landing-sites for move-based elements displaced from lower down within the base-generated VP structure " e. Internal-merge second-merge establishes more formal aspects related to edge-properties of scope and discourse-related material pegged to CP. See Roeper for a full discussion of recursion in child language acquisition. The Pisa Lectures , the acquisition of syntax resembles ordering from a menu: An especially dramatic example is provided by children who, for medical reasons, are unable to produce speech and, therefore, can never be corrected for a grammatical error but nonetheless, converge on the same grammar as their typically developing peers, according to comprehension-based tests of grammar. Binary parameters are common to digital computers, but may not be applicable to neurological systems such as the human brain. It is unclear that human language is actually anything like the generative conception of it. Since language, as imagined by nativists, is unlearnably complex,[citation needed] subscribers to this theory argue that it must, therefore, be innate. While all theories of language acquisition posit some degree of innateness, they vary in how much value they place on this innate capacity to acquire language. Empiricism places less value on the innate knowledge, arguing instead that the input, combined with both general and language-specific learning capacities, is sufficient for acquisition. The anti-nativist view has many strands, but a frequent theme is that language emerges from usage in social contexts, using learning mechanisms that are a part of a general cognitive learning apparatus which is what is innate. This position has been championed by David M. Philosophers, such as Fiona Cowie [47] and Barbara Scholz with Geoffrey Pullum [48] have also argued against certain nativist claims in support of empiricism. The new field of cognitive linguistics has emerged as a specific counter to Chomskian Generative Grammar and Nativism. Statistical learning in language acquisition Some language acquisition researchers, such as Elissa Newport , Richard Aslin, and Jenny Saffran , emphasize the possible roles of general learning mechanisms, especially statistical learning, in language acquisition. These findings suggest that early experience listening to language is critical to vocabulary acquisition. From the perspective of that debate, an important question is whether statistical learning can, by itself, serve as an alternative to nativist explanations for the grammatical constraints of human language. Chunking[edit] Chunking theories of language acquisition constitute a group of theories related to statistical learning theories, in that they assume the input from the environment plays an essential role; however, they postulate different learning mechanisms. The central idea of these theories is that language development occurs through the incremental acquisition of meaningful chunks of elementary constituents , which can be words, phonemes , or syllables. Recently, this approach has been highly successful in simulating several phenomena in the acquisition of syntactic categories [57] and the acquisition of phonological knowledge. They showed that toddlers develop their own individual rules for speaking with slots, into which they could put certain kinds of words. A significant outcome of the research was that rules inferred from toddler speech were better predictors of subsequent speech than traditional grammars. Language acquisition almost always occurs in children during a period of rapid increase in brain volume. At this point in development, a child has many more neural connections than he or she will have as an adult, allowing for the child to be more able to learn new things than he or she would be as an adult. It has been determined, through empirical research on developmentally normal children, as well as through some extreme cases of language deprivation, that there is a " sensitive period " of language acquisition in which human infants have the ability to learn any language. Several findings have observed that from birth until the age of six months, infants can discriminate the phonetic contrasts of all languages. Researchers believe that this gives infants the ability to

acquire the language spoken around them. After such an age, the child is able to perceive only the phonemes specific to the language learned. The reduced phonemic sensitivity enables children to build phonemic categories and recognize stress patterns and sound combinations specific to the language they are acquiring. In the ensuing years much is written, and the writing is normally never erased. After the age of ten or twelve, the general functional connections have been established and fixed for the speech cortex. Deaf children who acquire their first language later in life show lower performance in complex aspects of grammar. Researchers are unable to experimentally test the effects of the sensitive period of development on language acquisition, because it would be unethical to deprive children of language until this period is over. However, case studies on abused, language deprived children show that they were extremely limited in their language skills, even after instruction. However, during infancy, children begin to babble. Deaf babies babble in the same order when hearing sounds as non-deaf babies do, thus showing that babbling is not caused by babies simply imitating certain sounds, but is actually a natural part of the process of language development. However, deaf babies do often babble less than non-deaf babies and they begin to babble later on in infancy begin babbling at 11 months as compared to 6 months when compared to non-deaf babies. There have been many different studies examining different modes of language acquisition prior to birth. The study of language acquisition in fetuses started back in the late s when different researchers discovered that very young infants could discriminate their native language from other languages. In Mehler et al. These results suggest there are mechanisms for fetal auditory learning, and other researchers have found further behavioral evidence to support this notion. Fetus auditory learning through environment habituation has been seen in a variety of different modes, such as: Some researchers in the field of developmental neuroscience would argue that fetal auditory learning mechanisms are solely due to discrimination in prosodic elements. Although this would hold merit in an evolutionary psychology perspective i. This ability to sequence specific vowels gives newborn infants some of the fundamental mechanisms needed in order to learn the complex organization of a language. From a neuroscientific perspective, there are neural correlates have been found that demonstrate human fetal learning of speech-like auditory stimulus that most other studies have been analyzing Partanen et al. In this same study, there was "a significant correlation existed between the amount of prenatal exposure and brain activity, with greater activity being associated with a higher amount of prenatal speech exposure," pointing to the important learning mechanisms present before birth that is fine-tuned to features in speech Partanen et al. Before anything the learner needs to be able to hear what they are attempting to pronounce. Another is the capacity to engage in speech repetition. If a child knows fifty words or less by the age of 24 months, he or she is classified as a late-talker and future language development, like vocabulary expansion and the organization of grammar, is likely to be slower and stunted. Word segmentation, or the segmentation of words and syllables from fluent speech can be accomplished by eight-month-old infants. Specifically, learning to sit independently between 3 and 5 months has been found to predict receptive vocabulary at both 10 and 14 months of age, [90] and independent walking skills have been found to correlate with language skills around 10 to 14 months of age. Studies have also shown a correlation between Socio-Economic-Status and vocabulary acquisition. It has been proposed that children acquire these meanings with the use of processes modeled by latent semantic analysis ; that is, when they meet an unfamiliar word, children can use information in its context to correctly guess its rough area of meaning. Markman and others have proposed that children assume words to refer to objects with similar properties "cow" and "pig" might both be "animals" rather than to objects that are thematically related "cow" and "milk" are probably not both "animals". In terms of genetics, the gene ROBO1 has been associated with phonological buffer integrity or length. Kuniyoshi Sakai proposed, based on several neuroimaging studies, that there may be a "grammar center", where language is primarily processed in the left lateral premotor cortex located near the pre central sulcus and the inferior frontal sulcus. Additionally, these studies proposed that first language and second-language acquisition may be represented differently in the cortex. Even the number of times an examinee blinked was taken into account during the examination process. It was concluded that the brain does in fact process languages differently, but instead of it being directly related to proficiency levels, it is more so about how the brain processes language itself. The specialization of these language centers is so extensive that damage to them results in a critical condition known as aphasia.

3: Innateness and Language (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

1. *Chomsky's Case against Skinner. The behaviorist psychologist B.F. Skinner was the first theorist to propose a fully fledged theory of language acquisition in his book, Verbal Behavior (Skinner).*

One acquires a language not entirely through learning. Human language is complicated and is said to form one of the most complex areas of human cognition. Moreover, research has shown that language acquisition among children including the blind and the deaf occurs in ordered developmental stages. Moreover, in his work, *The Language Instinct*, Pinker argued that language in humans is a biological adaptation - language is hard-wired into our minds by evolution. The innateness hypothesis supports language nativism and several reasons and concepts have been proposed to support and explain this hypothesis. In his work, Chomsky introduced the idea of a Language Acquisition Device LAD to account for the competence of humans in acquiring a language. The LAD is an abstract part of the human mind which houses the ability for humans to acquire and produce language. The LAD then transforms these rules into basic grammar. Universal Grammar

In his argument for the existence of a LAD, Chomsky proposed that for a child to acquire a language, sufficient innate language-specific knowledge is needed. In this theory, it is suggested that all humans have a set of limited rules for grammar that are universal to all natural human languages. These rules are genetically wired into our brains and they can be altered in correspondence to the language children are exposed to. Since , the poverty of stimulus became increasingly integrated into the theory of generative grammar. Under positivity, they assert that children are only exposed to positive linguistic data. Moreover, there is lack in negative data that aids a child in identifying ungrammatical sentences that are unacceptable in the language. In addition, under degeneracy, it is stated that children are often exposed to linguistic data that are erroneous. This is supported by Zohari that states that in adult speech, erroneous utterances that include speech slips, ungrammatical sentences, incomplete sentences etc. However, despite the properties mentioned above, children would eventually be able to deliver a linguistic output that is similar to the target language within a relatively short amount of time. However, it is important to note that the argument that the poverty of stimulus supports the innateness hypothesis remains very controversial. Lenneberg expressed that age plays a salient role in the ability to acquire language. According to him, a child before the age of two will not sufficiently acquire language, while development of full native competence in a language must occur before the onset of puberty. This hypothesis is also said to explain why adults do not acquire languages as well as children. Evidence for the critical period hypothesis can be seen in the case of Genie. When discovered, she was without language. Moreover, some saw the case of Genie as a support to the innateness hypothesis. When the LAD is not triggered during the critical period, the natural process of language acquisition cannot be reached. It has been argued that it does not support linguistic innateness. Some have asserted that there is at least a possible degree of first language acquisition beyond the critical period. Initially a pidgin sign language with simple grammar, there were large grammatical differences and variations across signers. Eventually, the pidgin became a full-fledged language like a creole as younger signers developed a significantly more grammatically structured and regular system [32] such as specific grammatical structures [33] Often, the differences in abilities between the younger and older students to use sign language are said to suggest evidence for a critical period. The spontaneity of the development of NSL also shows that there is an innate element to the process of language learning. Other research has also indicated that any age effects depend largely on the opportunities for learning, learning situations and how significant the initial exposure is. They claim that sense and experience is the ultimate source of all concepts and knowledge. These data-driven theorists also support that children do not have linguistically-specific knowledge at birth. Language and grammar are only learned through exposure and accumulated experience. Arguments Contrastive analyses about the innateness hypothesis have been done by Jacek Fisiak in The fact that languages have similar properties is common and natural. Goodman also expressed that claims about language universals are dubious. He argues that it is not surprising that languages in the world will coincidentally have features in common. Over the years, many theories that are against language innateness have been developed to account for

language acquisition. Many have championed that human beings learn language through experience with some leaning towards children being equipped with learning mechanisms while others suggesting that social situations or cognitive capacities can account for language learning. The results of the research highlight that language acquisition is a process of learning through statistical means. Moreover, it raises the possibility that infants possess experience-dependent mechanisms that allow for word segmentation and acquisition of other aspects of language. By empirically studying the developmental stages of child language acquisition, he argues that children have specific cognitive capacities at birth that promote growth in linguistic competence and specific interpersonal abilities that aid language learning. Therefore, he contends that a child is born with the ability to learn and this is through testing and guessing instead of the innate ability that nativists support.

4: Innateness hypothesis | Revolv

This video will equip learners of linguistics with some of the principles of Nativism. Language is an Innate property of humans All human beings are born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD).

It emerged as a reaction against the Behaviourist language learning theory, and contradicted its model at almost every point of basic structure. Although Chomsky is credited to be its originator, in reality, the theory has been around for hundreds of years. Though radical in many ways, it was able to lay out some major connotations for understanding language acquisition. In the last few decades, the amount of discussion about first language acquisition in the context of the Innate Theory has grown considerably. Theoretical Bases The theoretical assumptions underlying the Innate Theory are as follows: Language acquisition is innately determined; that is, children are biologically programmed for language learning. They develop language in the same way as other biological functions. They start to speak at roughly the same age and proceed through roughly the same stages. Children are born with a special ability to systematically discover for themselves the underlying rules of a language system. This special ability enables them to learn the complexities of language in a relatively short period of time. Environmental differences may be associated with some variation in the rate of language acquisition. Lenneberg suggested that there is a biologically pre-determined period of life during which language can be acquired most easily. Beyond this time language becomes increasingly difficult to acquire. Through this statement Lenneberg provided a strong support for the Chomskian claim that language is innately determined and in the existence of an innate universal set of grammar. This is still a controversial view, and many linguists and psychologists do not believe language is as innate as Chomsky argues. Yet, he presents abundant evidence to support the view that the form of language is innate: The Poverty of the Stimulus Argument: The first argument in favour of this statement is concerned with the logical problem of language acquisition, which the behaviourists failed to recognise. This argument is known as The Poverty of the Stimulus Argument. The argument states that: Virtually all children successfully learn their native language at a time in life when they would not be expected to learn anything else so complicated. The language the child is exposed to in the environment is full of confusing information and does not provide all the information which the child needs. Children are by no means systematically corrected or instructed on language by parents. When parents correct, they tend to focus on meaning rather than form, and children often ignore the correction and continue to use their own ways of saying things. Children learn to use very complex language structures without instruction or large numbers of examples of all the linguistic rules and patterns that they eventually know. Children produce words they never heard before e. To justify this argument Chomsky opines that, language is not a set of habits, but it is rule-governed; subsequently, the mind is responsible for the perception and processing of linguistic data because it is genetically equipped with a device that make language acquisition possible. UG does not claim that all human languages have the same grammar, or that all humans are programmed with a structure that underlies all surface expressions of human language. Rather UG provides a set of basic grammatical elements or fixed elements or fixed abstract principles that are common in all natural languages, which explains how children acquire their language s or how they construct valid sentences of their language in a relatively short period of time. Chomsky defined these abstract representations of grammatical rules as language universals. Chomsky says that there are two types of language universals: The substantive universals consist of fixed features of language like phonemes or syntactic categories like nouns N and verbs V. Let us consider, for example, some distinctive phonological features. The formal universals are the general principles which determine the form and the manner of operation of grammatical rules of particular language. Chomsky further argues that the universal principles that children discover form their core grammar. On the other hand, the rules or features that are not determined by universal grammar form their peripheral grammar. Counterarguments on the Innate Theory To some extent, the Innate Theory seems complementary to the Behaviourist Theory, whose major principles are further clarified and then developed by the innate theorists. The following arguments represent the fact that some of the precepts of the Innate Theory should be refined: Language acquisition is not totally of inborn nature nor is

it just a matter of biological make-up. There is also an undeniable effect in language learning coming from the social environment since infants grow up biologically in a social environment from which they cannot be divorced. The presence of a mother and father in front of a child establishes a natural social environment. It is possible that children have inborn capability to follow certain grammatical principles, but their acquisition of words depends crucially on their environment. The use and influence of imitations and reinforcements cannot totally be denied or disregarded by saying that they destroy or relegate the possible creativity in language learning. For example, the role of imitations and repetitions cannot be wholly denied in such areas like learning vocabulary items and structural patterns. Criticism Although this theory provides what some claim is a reasonable explanation about acquiring language, this theory lacks sufficient evidence. Some of the cases against this theory include: Firstly, the LAD is an abstract concept and lacks adequate scientific support. Thirdly, the theory placed more emphasis on the linguistic competence of adult native speakers, but not enough on the developmental aspects of language acquisition. References Clark, Herbert H. An Introduction to Psychology. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,

5: What is Language Acquisition? - Introduction to Linguistics - www.enganchecubano.com

Innateness hypothesis definition, the theory that humans are biologically equipped with a knowledge of certain universal elements of language structure that is brought into play in the course of native-language acquisition.

E-mail In the s , linguist Noam Chomsky proposed a revolutionary idea: We are all born with an innate knowledge of grammar that serves as the basis for all language acquisition. In other words, for humans, language is a basic instinct. The theory, however, has long been met with widespread criticism “ until now. A new study presents compelling evidence to suggest Chomsky may have been right all along. The ability to walk upright for long periods of time is distinctly human; it sets us apart from our closest genetic cousins, the great apes. However, walking is both innate and learned, and while every human child is born with the underlying mechanisms needed to do so, the skill will never manifest without proper guidance and examples, Slate reported. In this respect, Chomsky taught that language is much like walking. Although humans learn by example, he proposed that we are all born with a fundamental understanding of the underlying mechanisms of language. Researchers have long failed to prove this same instinctual knowledge also exists for grammar. The most commonly accepted viewpoint on language acquisition suggests humans learn language by observing and memorizing grammatical cues. This theory posits that our understanding of language is built solely on experience, not an internal language processing feature. These sentences were specifically designed so all obvious indications of grammar, such as voice intonation cues, were missing. As subjects listened on, researchers measured their brain activity using two tools: The first measures tiny magnetic fields created by brain activity and the second measures brain activity in patients undergoing brain surgery. Results revealed brain activity changed depending on whether the volunteers had listened to a sentence, a phrase, or a word list. This showed that the subjects were able to process the grammar minus the obvious learned cues. According to Poeppel, our brains lock onto every word to comprehend phrases and sentences. Poeppel also recognized the controversy in his finding, seeing as the preferred view is that grammar is achieved by using acoustic cues such as intonation, and statistical cues, like word transition. Cortical tracking of hierarchical linguistic structures in connected speech. This article has been updated to include quotes from researcher Dr.

6: Innateness hypothesis - Wikipedia

Early Theories. One of the earliest scientific explanations of language acquisition was provided by Skinner (). As one of the pioneers of behaviorism, he accounted for language development by means of environmental influence.

Innateness hypothesis Save The innateness hypothesis is an expression coined by Hilary Putnam to refer to a linguistic theory of language acquisition which holds that at least some knowledge about language exists in humans at birth. Facts about the complexity of human language systems, the universality of language acquisition, the facility that children demonstrate in acquiring these systems, and the comparative performance of adults in attempting the same task are all commonly invoked in support. Empiricists advocate that language is entirely learned. Linguistic nativism Linguistic nativism is the theory that humans are born with some knowledge of language. One acquires a language not entirely through learning. Human language is complicated and is said to form one of the most complex areas of human cognition. Moreover, research has shown that language acquisition among children including the blind and the deaf occurs in ordered developmental stages. According to Noam Chomsky,[6] "The speed and precision of vocabulary acquisition leaves no real alternative to the conclusion that the child somehow has the concepts available before experience with language and is basically learning labels for concepts that are already a part of his or her conceptual apparatus. Moreover, in his work, *The Language Instinct*, Pinker argued that language in humans is a biological adaptationâ€”language is hard-wired into our minds by evolution. The innateness hypothesis supports language nativism and several reasons and concepts have been proposed to support and explain this hypothesis. In his work, Chomsky introduced the idea of a language acquisition device LAD to account for the competence of humans in acquiring a language. The universal grammar UG that is also often credited to Chomsky was later introduced. Language acquisition device According to Chomsky, humans are born with a set of language learning tools referred to as the LAD. The LAD is an abstract part of the human mind which houses the ability for humans to acquire and produce language. The LAD then transforms these rules into basic grammar. Universal grammar In his argument for the existence of a LAD, Chomsky proposed that for a child to acquire a language, sufficient innate language-specific knowledge is needed. In this theory, it is suggested that all humans have a set of limited rules for grammar that are universal to all natural human languages. These rules are genetically wired into our brains and they can be altered in correspondence to the language children are exposed to. He argued that "properties of a generative grammar arise from an "innate" universal grammar". Since , the poverty of stimulus became increasingly integrated into the theory of generative grammar. Under positivity, they assert that children are only exposed to positive linguistic data. Moreover, there is lack in negative data that aids a child in identifying ungrammatical sentences that are unacceptable in the language. In addition, under degeneracy, it is stated that children are often exposed to linguistic data that are erroneous. This is supported by Zohari that states that in adult speech, erroneous utterances that include speech slips, ungrammatical sentences, incomplete sentences etc. However, despite the properties mentioned above, children would eventually be able to deliver a linguistic output that is similar to the target language within a relatively short amount of time. However, it is important to note that the argument that the poverty of stimulus supports the innateness hypothesis remains very controversial. Lenneberg expressed that age plays a salient role in the ability to acquire language. According to him, a child before the age of two will not sufficiently acquire language, while development of full native competence in a language must occur before the onset of puberty. This hypothesis is also said to explain why adults do not acquire languages as well as children. Evidence for the critical period hypothesis can be seen in the case of Genie. When discovered, she was without language. Genie was said to have right-hemisphere language, resembling other cases where language was acquired outside of the "critical period". Moreover, some saw the case of Genie as a support to the innateness hypothesis. When the LAD is not triggered during the critical period, the natural process of language acquisition cannot be reached. It has been argued that it does not support linguistic innateness. Some have asserted that there is at least a possible degree of first language acquisition beyond the critical period. Initially a pidgin sign language with simple grammar, there were large grammatical differences

and variations across signers. Eventually, the pidgin became a full-fledged language like a creole as younger signers developed a significantly more grammatically structured and regular system[31] such as specific grammatical structures[32] Often, the differences in abilities between the younger and older students to use sign language are said to suggest evidence for a critical period. The spontaneity of the development of NSL also shows that there is an innate element to the process of language learning. Other research has also indicated that any age effects depend largely on the opportunities for learning, learning situations and how significant the initial exposure is. They claim that sense and experience is the ultimate source of all concepts and knowledge. These data-driven theorists also support that children do not have linguistically-specific knowledge at birth. Language and grammar are only learned through exposure and accumulated experience. This is also called the "nurture" perspective as opposed to the "nature" perspective linguistic nativism. In fact, some would argue that "language structure" is created through language use. Arguments Contrastive analyses about the innateness hypothesis have been done by Jacek Fisiak in The fact that languages have similar properties is common and natural. Goodman also expressed that claims about language universals are dubious. He argues that it is not surprising that languages in the world will coincidentally have features in common. Over the years, many theories that are against language innateness have been developed to account for language acquisition. Many have championed that human beings learn language through experience with some leaning towards children being equipped with learning mechanisms while others suggesting that social situations or cognitive capacities can account for language learning. Bates and Elman summarised a research conducted by Saffran, Aslin and Newport[43] that supports that learning is "a purely inductive, statistically driven process". The results of the research highlight that language acquisition is a process of learning through statistical means. Moreover, it raises the possibility that infants possess experience-dependent mechanisms that allow for word segmentation and acquisition of other aspects of language. By empirically studying the developmental stages of child language acquisition, he argues that children have specific cognitive capacities at birth that promote growth in linguistic competence and specific interpersonal abilities that aid language learning. Geoffrey Sampson also supports that the "richness of the environment" plays a role in language acquisition. Therefore, he contends that a child is born with the ability to learn and this is through testing and guessing instead of the innate ability that nativists support.

7: Innateness and Contemporary Theories of Cognition (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

1 THEORIES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION Over the last fifty years, several theories have been put forward to explain the process by which children learn to understand and speak a language.

Whereas other species do communicate with an innate ability to produce a limited number of meaningful vocalizations e. This ability is remarkable in itself. What makes it even more remarkable is that researchers are finding evidence for mastery of this complex skill in increasingly younger children. Infants as young as 12 months are reported to have sensitivity to the grammar needed to understand causative sentences who did what to whom; e. After more than 60 years of research into child language development, the mechanism that enables children to segment syllables and words out of the strings of sounds they hear, and to acquire grammar to understand and produce language is still quite an enigma. Early Theories One of the earliest scientific explanations of language acquisition was provided by Skinner As one of the pioneers of behaviorism , he accounted for language development by means of environmental influence. Skinner argued that children learn language based on behaviorist reinforcement principles by associating words with meanings. Correct utterances are positively reinforced when the child realizes the communicative value of words and phrases. Consequently, he proposed the theory of Universal Grammar: Universal Grammar is considered to contain all the grammatical information needed to combine these categories, e. For example, according to the Universal Grammar account, children instinctively know how to combine a noun e. This Chomskian approach to language acquisition has inspired hundreds of scholars to investigate the nature of these assumed grammatical categories and the research is still ongoing. Contemporary Research A decade or two later some psycholinguists began to question the existence of Universal Grammar. They argued that categories like noun and verb are biologically, evolutionarily and psychologically implausible and that the field called for an account that can explain for the acquisition process without innate categories. Researchers started to suggest that instead of having a language-specific mechanism for language processing, children might utilise general cognitive and learning principles. Whereas researchers approaching the language acquisition problem from the perspective of Universal Grammar argue for early full productivity, i. It is suggested that children are sensitive to patterns in language which enables the acquisition process. An example of this gradual pattern learning is morphology acquisition. Morphemes are the smallest grammatical markers, or units, in language that alter words. In English, regular plurals are marked with an "s" morpheme e. Children are considered to acquire their first instances of third singular forms as entire phrasal chunks Daddy kicks, a girl eats, a dog barks without the ability of teasing the finest grammatical components apart. When the child hears a sufficient number of instances of a linguistic construction i. In this case, the repeated pattern is the "s" marker in this particular verb form. Approaching language acquisition from the perspective of general cognitive processing is an economical account of how children can learn their first language without an excessive biolinguistic mechanism. Conclusion However, finding a solid answer to the problem of language acquisition is far from being over. Our current understanding of the developmental process is still immature. Investigators of Universal Grammar are still trying to convince that language is a task too demanding to acquire without specific innate equipment, whereas the constructivist researchers are fiercely arguing for the importance of linguistic input. The biggest questions, however, are yet unanswered. How much does the child need to be exposed to language to achieve the adult-like state? What account can explain variation between languages and the language acquisition process in children acquiring very different languages to English? The mystery of language acquisition is granted to keep psychologists and linguists alike astonished a decade after decade. Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. Journal of Child Language, 35 1: Evidence from the dative. Language Learning and Development, 7 1: Journal of Child Language, 32 2: The New Science of Language and Mind. How to reference this article:

8: Innateness hypothesis - Infogalactic: the planetary knowledge core

Noam Chomsky postulated that the mechanism of the language acquisition is derived from the innate processes. Innate is something which is already there in mind since birth. The theory proposed by Chomsky is proved by the children living in same linguistic community.

This attack convinced many of the inherent limits of behaviorist theorizing see Cowie for details. The defining feature of Behaviorism is its anti-mentalism—the methodological claim that one can must provide a psychological account of human beings without referencing internal mental states. Specifically, Skinner took it for granted that every animal has a range of naturally emitted behaviors. So the notion of an innate behavioral repertoire, and of innately specified links between environmental stimuli and elements of that repertoire, are very much part of the Behaviorist picture. All parties take it for granted that babies babble, and suckle in the presence of the right stimuli, because such behaviors are part of their biological heritage. There might be disagreements about the underlying mechanisms and epistemological standing of that heritage, but it is hard to deny that humans are in some sense pre-informed that they need to suck to get milk from the breast. So if we set aside the controversy over the subject matter of psychology behavior or the internal mind? Behaviorism was for the most part truer to its affiliations with philosophical Empiricism and Associationism, and its Nativist commitments were obscured. One important lesson is that in the Nativism-Empiricism debate we are often dealing with ideology, not theory Pinker Here we briefly review some of the elements critical to the resurgence of Nativism. The second fact is fairly obvious, but the first is not. A generative grammar of a particular language is a system of rules that generates all and only the sentences of that language, along with a characterization of how each sentence sounds and what it means. Chomskyan linguistics is the project of discovering the elements and structure of such rule systems. The link between linguistics and innateness comes in a second important move: Chomsky argued that every speaker of a language has a mental representation of its grammar. The Empiricist would aim to show that the grammar if it indeed is in the head could be learned from experience in much the way one learns other facts about the world. The Nativist, in contrast, is ready to consider that learning a language—now reconceived as a matter of grammar acquisition—depends in some way on a language-specific innate endowment. This brings us to the third important step. Chomsky argued that a comparison of i the grammar that has to be acquired, and ii the idiosyncrasies of the acquisition process and the data presented to the language-learner, favors the Nativist approach. So Chomsky did more than simply point to language learning as an area in which the Nativist case might be built. Linguistic performance, he argued, is scientifically intractable, because it is the result of too many idiosyncratic interacting factors. We would do better to take on the much more circumscribed question: It soon became clear that even if we set aside the performance systems involved in real linguistic behavior, the rules of the grammar were themselves very complicated, often unintuitive, and abstract, in that they involved categories and constructs that were at a significant remove from the data. Yet every normal child does in fact learn a language, and so does somehow master these rules. To resist the Nativist conclusion, the Empiricist has to return to the drawing board to develop a more powerful general learning theory. There was significant controversy about all the elements of this paradigm shift: But the shift held. Linguistics went from a backwater to a central player as a model and as an integrator in the development of cognitive science as a multi-disciplinary approach to aspects of cognition and mind. Developmental psycholinguistics, a field more or less born out of these upheavals, set out to investigate experimentally whether the details about language acquisition actually supported the Chomskyan Nativist hypotheses, and in time, many developmental psychologists broke from the reigning Empiricist paradigm and began to deploy Poverty of the Stimulus arguments in other areas of cognitive development. The older charge, which we alluded to briefly at the start, was that the doctrine was in some way incompatible with a naturalistic or scientific approach to the world. But beside this taint of anti-naturalism, there seemed to be another problem, highlighted by Locke: It is this presumption in favor of Empiricism that was inherited by modern versions of Associationist psychology; it was taken for granted that if there were equally good Empiricist and Nativist accounts, the Empiricist account

would be methodologically preferable on the grounds of simplicity. On the first point, Chomsky repeatedly stressed that claims about internalized grammars and universal grammar were unexceptional empirical hypotheses about the internal causes of the observational evidence. The question of what is built in and what needs to be learned is a straightforward scientific question. This Nativist connection to evolution raises a natural question: The Empiricist paradigm, after all, has always promoted itself in terms of its very austere view of human knowers: But as we noted earlier, the Darwinian Revolution made it plain that as a general rule, evolutionary forces shape organisms to fit into their niche. Birds are not blank slates at birth. But we humans grow from the same evolutionary branches as the animals around us. This line of thought leaves us with a few possibilities. One is that all the innate preparedness painstakingly established in our evolutionary ancestors was somehow discarded, and we humans were redesignedâ€”from scratch, as it wereâ€”as blank slates with a uniquely powerful learning capability to make up for our meager initial holdings. This is, arguably, the traditional Empiricist approach. Another is that we inherited a good deal of what evolution had established in the cognitive systems of the organisms from which we evolved, but that our further advance was, to a first approximation, based not on innate factors but on learning. A third viewâ€”the Nativist positionâ€”is that more was added in the course of our own evolution, and that we too are in some way pre-informed about at least some matters most critical for our survival. These possibilities are too vague to be taken as hypotheses, but the Nativist view seems at least as initially plausible as the Empiricist approach. The important point is that it should have been that plausible a century ago. Somehow the Nativist implications of evolutionary theorizing were also obscured. One suspects that a deep cultural and intellectual bias was at work. Once we include in our measurement of simplicity how well a hypothesis fits with other established theories, the simpler hypothesis is that human beings are part of the natural biological order, and that like all other organisms they are to some degree pre-shaped by evolution to fit into their distinctive ecological niche. The naturalistic view of human beings ushered in by Darwin should have, all by itself, revived Nativism. A more enterprising Empiricism might have noted that evolutionary theory commits us to the idea that whatever is innate in us was, at least in one sense, shaped by experience. Experience here would be ancestral experience, not the experience of the individual subject, but such a view would still ground knowledge in experience. But this opportunity was for the most part missed. Problems and Prospects 1. Part of the problem was that the original case for linguistic Nativism had been made, at least in part, by focusing on what looked to be unique features of language. Language has long been seen as exceptional; as the distinguishing feature of human cognition. Chomsky championed this view, and argued that language is central to a special kind of human creativity Chomsky We have already noted one facet of this exceptionalism: But there are also unexpected singularities in how children learn; in the learning process itself. Each child is exposed to an idiosyncratic sample of the language their primary linguistic data. Each sample is compatible with any number of non-equivalent grammars that all generate the pld sample so far, but give different verdicts about new cases not in the pld. We might therefore expect i that the grammar a child acquires reflects the idiosyncrasies of the pld the child was exposed to, ii that, as a consequence, children will disagree about what is and what is not grammatical, and iii that adults will therefore have to correct them to smooth out errors that reflect those idiosyncrasies. But this, Chomsky argued, is not what we find Chomsky If this is right, it suggests that the child must have prior information that somehow constrains or orders the hypothesis space that steers the child to the right grammar, and it is hard to see how this information can be acquired through experience. Furthermore, the pld contain ungrammatical and incomplete sentences, but children somehow filter out this noise, and do so without explicit instructions or feedback. There are a number of other striking features about language learning that Chomsky drew attention to: Each of these claims has prompted a long trail of experimentation and theory construction, and all remain controversial see, for example, the discussion in Menn et al. But their overall effect was to single out language learning as exceptional, and perhaps unique. Chomsky himself marked this difference by speaking of language acquisition and contrasting it with learning, a term he reserved for induction-based processes. It is the distinctive human cognitive trait, and is essentially different from all known animal communication systems. The fact that we have it makes us exceptional as a species. Taken together, these considerations supported a Nativist account of language learning, but tended to

discourage the idea of exporting the Nativist revolution beyond language. And how much of that knowledge comes to the child as effortlessly and without explicit instruction? Chomsky set out a fully general schema for Poverty of the Stimulus arguments that did not depend on the distinctive features of grammars and language acquisition, which had been featured in making the original Nativist case. Chomsky began to speak of language as one of possibly many mental organs that grow in the individual. This naturalistic biological model embeds Nativism about mental organs into a wider and uncontroversial biological Nativism. It is uncontroversial that kidneys do not develop as a response to the environment, and they certainly do not copy the environment. The human body is organized in such a way that in normal fetal environments, kidneys will form. This point could now be deployed against the Empiricist. To presume that the basic features of our physical-biological nature are internally pre-determined, but that our mental-psychological nature is not, but is wholly externally determined, is to introduce a dualism that requires a special defense. But Empiricism seems to make just this presumption, and offers no credible defense. So the tables are turned. The Nativist has been freed from the earlier supernaturalism charge, the simplicity-card of Empiricist models turns out to be spurious, and now the Empiricist seems to be the one carrying an unmotivated dualism as excess baggage. In its most general form, it has displaced the idea of information in the mind as for the most part a single uniform set of sentences or data points, and put in its place an alternative architecture of systems and subsystems of knowledge and information, each, possibly, having its own design, pattern of representations, specialized function, pattern of activation, level of integration with other systems, sometimes specific locus in the brain, and so on. We mention here a number of developments significant to the Nativist side that that have grown out of this central theme. The modularity of mind hypothesis. Each of these modules has a specific task-orientation, and does its work independently of much of what is going on in the rest of the system. So, for instance, we more-or-less automatically hear sound patterns as sentences of our native language, perceive patterns of light and shadow as configurations of objects in space, and so on. In these terms, the language organ is just one of a set of freestanding mental modules. Fodor suggested a checklist of properties that such modules could be expected to have, and among them is that they are innately determined. One of the controversial arguments used to defend massive modularity claims is that evolution favors this sort of architecture. This brings us to the central doctrine of Evolutionary Psychologyâ€”i. Our ancestors needed to distinguish fair-traders from freeloaders. Those who could be consistently taken advantage of in exchanges were at a significant disadvantage in terms of survival. At some point, a mechanism evolvedâ€”a computational program in the brain, a mental organ or mini-organ? For Evolutionary Psychologists, the mind is a collection of evolved sub-systems adapted to the environments of our Pleistocene ancestors, not to our own environment. To keep the players straight, we must note that Chomsky himself has had a very complicated relationship with evolutionary explanations of mind and cognition. The modularist position, and the Nativism that fits it so well, have been supported by recent work on animal cognition, especially the discovery of very sophisticated information-rich sub-systems in the animal brain see Andrews for a philosophy-oriented review. Just to take navigation as an example, desert ants have an innate dead reckoning module for navigation, and various birds species have intricate innately-based systems based on the fixed stars, magnetic fields, the azimuth angle of the Sun, and so on.

9: Noam Chomsky's Theory Of Universal Grammar Is Right; It's Hardwired Into Our Brains

Linguistics Language Acquisition. Sign Language - Innateness of UG Connectionist Theories – Claims that exposure to language develops and strengthens.

It involves the picking up of diverse capacities including syntax, phonetics, and an extensive vocabulary. However, learning a first language is something that every normal child does successfully without much need for formal lessons. Most children in a linguistic community seem to succeed in converging on a grammatical system equivalent to everyone else in the community with few wrong turns, which is quite remarkable considering the pitfalls and complexity of the system. By the time a child utters a first word, according to the Linguistic Society of America, he or she has already spent many months playing around with the sounds and intonations of language, [2] but there is still no one point at which all children learn to talk. Children acquire language in stages and different children reach various stages at different times, although they have one thing in common and that is that typically developing children learning the same language will follow an almost identical pattern in the sequence of stages they go through. The stages usually consist of: However most of the concepts and theories we do have explaining how native languages are acquired go back to the approaches put forward by researchers such as Skinner, Chomsky, Piaget and others. Most of the modern theories we have today have incorporated aspects of these theories into their various findings.

Skinner In a piece of literature appeared that would come to affect how we view language, human behaviour and language learning. Operational conditioning refers to a method of learning that occurs through rewards and punishments for behaviour. Behaviour operates on the environment to bring about favorable consequences or avoid adverse ones. These same ideas of operant conditioning can also be applied to language acquisition because Skinner believed that language could be treated like any other kind of cognitive behaviour. According to the behaviourist theory, language learning is a process of habit formation that involves a period of trial and error where the child tries and fails to use correct language until it succeeds. Infants also have human role models in their environment that provide the stimuli and rewards required for operant conditioning. For example, if a child starts babblings, which resembles appropriate words, then his or her babbling will be rewarded by a parent or loved one by positive reinforcement such as a smile or clap. Since the babblings were rewarded, this reward reinforces further articulations of the same sort into groupings of syllables and words in a similar situation Demirezen, However, before a child can begin to speak, they first start by listening to the sounds in their environment for the first years of their life. Gradually, the child learns to associate certain sounds with certain situations such as the sound of endearment a mother produces when feeding her child. These sounds then become pleasurable for the child on their own without being accompanied by food and eventually the child will attempt to imitate these sounds to invite the attention of his mother or another adult. If these sounds resemble that of adult language the mother will respond with reward and the operant conditioning process begins. According to Goodluck, nativists view language as a fundamental part of the human genome, as a trait that makes humans human, and its acquisition is a natural part of maturation. For example, the LAD already contains the concept of verb tense and so by listening to word forms such as "worked" or "played". Yang also believes that children also initially possess, then subsequently develop, an innate understanding or hypothesis about grammar regardless of where they are raised. Another argument of the nativist or innate theory is that there is a critical period for language acquisition, which is a time frame during which environmental exposure is needed to stimulate an innate trait. Linguist Eric Lenneberg in postulated that the critical period of language acquisition ends around the age of 12 years. He believed that if no language was learned before then, it could never be learned in a normal and functional sense. Cognitive Theory[edit] Jean Piaget was a Swiss psychologist that was famous for his four stages of cognitive development for children, which included the development of language. However, children do not think like adults and so before they can begin to develop language they must first actively construct their own understanding of the world through their interactions with their environment. A child has to understand a concept before he or she can acquire the particular language which expresses that concept. For example, a child first becomes aware of a concept such as relative

size and only afterward do they acquire the words and patterns to convey that concept. Essentially it is impossible for a young child to voice concepts that are unknown to them and therefore once a child learns about their environment then they can map language onto their prior experience. Language is only one of the many human mental or cognitive activities and many cognitivists believe that language emerges within the context of other general cognitive abilities like memory, attention and problem solving because it is a part of their broader intellectual development. However, according to Goodluck , once language does emerge it is usually within certain stages and children go through these stages in a fixed order that is universal in all children. Sensory-Motor Period- birth to 2 years Children are born with "action schemas" to "assimilate" information about the world such as sucking or grasping. Language is considered egocentric because they see things purely from their own perspective. Operational Period- 7 to 11 years and 11 years to adulthood Piaget divides this period into two parts: Language at this stage reveals the movement of their thinking from immature to mature and from illogical to logical. They are also able to "de-center" or view things from a perspective other than their own. The child is a little linguist analyzing language from randomly encountered adult utterances. The interaction theory proposes that language exists for the purpose of communication and can only be learned in the context of interaction with adults and older children. It stresses the importance of the environment and culture in which the language is being learned during early childhood development because this social interaction is what first provides the child with the means of making sense of their own behaviour and how they think about the surrounding world. This tailored articulation used by care-givers to young children to maximize phonemic contrasts and pronunciation of correct forms is known as child-directed speech CDS. Vygotsky also developed the concepts of private speech which is when children must speak to themselves in a self guiding and directing way- initially out loud and later internally and the zone of proximal development which refers to the tasks a child is unable to complete alone but is able to complete with the assistance of an adult. The attention and time that a mother spends talking about topics that the child is already focused on highly correlates with early vocabulary size. The utterances of the mother and father during the activities are ritualized and predictable so that the child is gradually moved to an active position where they take over the movements of the care-taker and eventually the ritualized language as well. Basically the care-giver is providing comprehensible contexts in which the child can acquire language Mason, Adults adapt their behaviour towards children to construct a protected world in which the child is gradually inclined to take part in a growing number of scenarios and scripts and in this way the child is lead gradually further and further into language. Modern Theories and Models of Language Acquisition[edit] Usage-Based Theory[edit] The usage-based theory of language suggests that children initially build up their language through very concrete constructions based around individual words or frames on the basis of the speech they hear and use. Basically this means, according to Tomasello the developer of the theory, that children learn language from their language experiences and a language structure emerges from language use. Constructions gradually become more general and more abstract during the third and fourth years of life and grammar emerges as the speakers of a language create linguistic constructions out of recurring sequences of symbols Tomasello, It will then be activated more easily when using it themselves on subsequent occasions. Linguistic forms with high token frequency will be learned early and lead to more strongly entrenched linguistic representations and seems to protect the child from error. Token frequency also has a strong influence on child learning and you often see a close relationship between adult input and child output Saxton, Optimality Theory[edit] Optimality Theory OT was originally proposed by Prince and Smolensky and has subsequently been further developed by other researchers. OT suggests that the observed forms of language arise from the interaction between conflicting constraints and like other models of linguistics, contain an input and an output and a relation between the two. A constraint is considered optimal if it incurs the least serious violations of a set of constraints, taking into account their hierarchical ranking. In optimality theory, the essence of both language learning in general learnability and language acquisition actual development children go through entails the rankings of constraints from an initial state of the grammar to the language specific ranking of the target grammar McCarthy, [17]. OT is a development of generative grammar, a theory sharing the quest for universal principles such as universal grammar but differs from the theory proposed by Chomsky because optimality

theory believes that these universal constraints are violable Kager, [18]. Languages are able to differ in their ranking of constraints by giving priorities to some constraints over others. Language acquisition can be described as the process of adjusting the ranking of these constraints that are considered universal: There is also one family of constraints whose properties cut across all subdisciplinary domains, called the faithfulness constraints, which say that input and output are identical. Another term coined by the optimality theory is markedness, which refers to the continuum that language-universal and language-specific properties rest on, with completely unmarked properties being those found in virtually all languages and extremely marked properties being found quite rarely. However markedness embodies universality in a "soft" sense, with violations of universality existing between languages. Native Language Magnet Model[edit] Young children learn their mother tongue rapidly and effortlessly, following similar developmental paths regardless of culture. Although we still remain capable of discriminating non native phonetic contrasts as we age, it is at a reduced level when compared with native contrasts. The idea that more than selection is involved in development phonetic perception has been clearly demonstrated by experimental findings showing that native language phonetic perception shows a significant improvement between 6 and 12 months of age. This is due to the fact that initial language exposure causes physical changes in neural tissue that reflects the statistical perceptual properties of language input Kuhl Another finding by Kuhl that has expanded the Native Language Magnet Model has been the research indicating that both native and non-native performances at 7 months of age predicted future language abilities but in opposite directions. Better native phonetic perception at 7 months of age predicted accelerated language development at between 14 and 30 months whereas better non-native performance at 7 months predicted slower language development at 14 and 30 months. Results supported the view that the ability to discriminate non-native phonetic contrasts reflects the degree to which the brain remains in the initial state, open and uncommitted to native language speech patterns. Try to answer correctly as many questions as you can, collecting jeopardy cash along the way until you meet the final jeopardy question at the end.

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