



Note to translator:

- The examples of 'data' are from spoken English and may not be easily translated into another language
- If you need to leave them in English, I can explain the concepts behind the examples

Theories of Language Acquisition





Nature vs Nurture

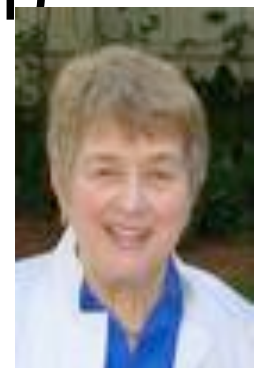
- Description of Acquisition process
- Important features/variables
- Data
- Problems with the positions



Theories: Nurture



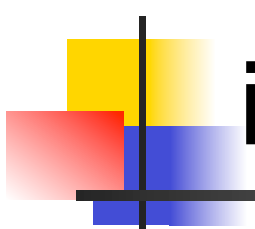
- Imitation Theory, Reinforcement Theory, Interactionist Theory etc.
- Focus on the role of the environment
- Behaviorist (Skinner/Watson) or Interactionists (Snow/Berko-Gleason)



Theories: Nurture Imitation Theory



- Language Acquisition: process of repeating what is heard/seen
- *Role of caregivers as models*
- Focus on parents simplified use of language with children (not all cultures have simplified use of language with children)



Q: Children learn language by imitating language models?

If children really imitated adults, we would never expect them to say anything adults don't

BUT children say things that they never hear from adults!

- **I bited the cookie*
- **Don't giggle me!*
- **I have two foots.*



Imitation Theory: Positive Data

Children DO acquire the language of those in their environment

-Korea vs Mexico

Input is important, children do acquire frequent words/signs used in their environment

++Vocabulary++



Reinforcement Theory

- Parents/caregivers reinforce ‘correct’ language use
- Language Acquisition: Habit formation
- Ignore/recast ‘wrong’ utterances
 - C: Daddy here.
 - M: Yes, Daddy is here.
- Reinforce “correct” utterances



Q: Parents correct their children's language?

Children make lots of mistakes when they start to learn language, and parents often correct them (but most parents focus on MEANING).

C: Mommy not a boy, he a girl!

M: That's right!

BUT children typically fail to register correction (does not lead to instant change)



Resistance to correction (Braine)

C: Want other one spoon, Daddy.

D: You mean you want the other spoon.

C: Yes, I want other one spoon, please Daddy.

D: Can you say "the other spoon"?

C: Other...one...spoon.

D: Say "other"

C: Other.

D: "Spoon"

C: Spoon

D: "Other spoon"

C: Other spoon. Now give me other one spoon!

Other problems of nurture theories

- MILESTONES of children

- despite their environments
- Their languages
- Their parents style of interaction

- Simple memorization/reinforcement cannot explain understanding/production of new/novel sentences





Theories: Nature vs Nurture

- Nature (Chomsky, Lenneberg)
- “The Innateness Hypothesis”
- nativism
 - Focus on innate (inborn) features
(Universal Grammar/LAD)





Nature Theory Variables

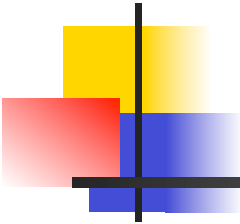
- Language acquisition: by instinct, biologically pre-programmed
- Language Acquisition Device/Universal Grammar
- Critical period
- Milestones/Stages

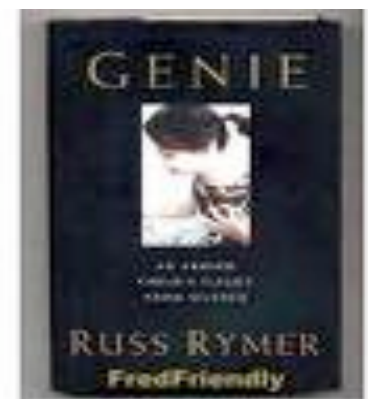




“Wild Children”

- Victor the “wild boy of aveyron”
- Genie
- Chelesa

- 
-
- Victor: The Wild Boy of Aveyron
 - 1800s France, 11-12 yrs of age
 - Itard: social training/language use
 - Results
 - Genie: Isolation and Abuse
 - 1970 California, 13 yrs of age
 - Social training/language use
 - Results





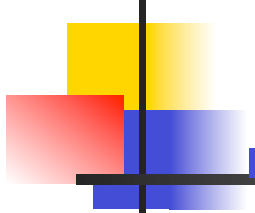
Clip from film “Secrets of a Wild Child”



Chelsea

- Background
 - Born deaf, diagnosed as MR
 - Loving sheltered family
 - 31: hearing near normal levels w/aids
- Afterwords
 - Socially independent, job in vets office
 - IQ about 10 yrs old
 - Communicates, reads, writes (2000 words)

Chelsea: Language Sample

- 
- The small a the hat.
 - Richard eat peppers hot.
 - Orange Tim car in.
 - Banana the eat.
 - I Wanda be drive come.
 - Breakfast eating girl.
 - Combing hair the boy.
 - The woman is bus the going.
 - The girl is cone the ice cream shopping buying the man.



Theories

- Today: most all believe BOTH nature and nurture
- Research/data
- explain the **role/importance** of each in Language Acquisition



Nature problems

- Look at performance only
- assumptions



Summary of Two Theories

	nurture	nature
Imitation/interaction	essential	Triggers LAD
Critical Period	Sensitive time	LAD shuts off
motherese	important	Poor input need UG/LAD
Corrections	important	useless
overextensions	(not reinforced)	UG



Data supports which theory? Nature vs Nurture



Data supports which theory? Nature vs Nurture

- A group of children studied: Their earliest words were “HI” and “BYE BYE.”



Data supports which theory?

Nature vs Nurture

C: My teacher holded the baby rabbits and we patted them.

A: Did you say your teacher held the baby rabbits?

C: Yes..

A: She held them tightly?

C: No, she holded them loosely.



Data supports which theory?

Nature vs. Nurture

- Adult: I'll make a cup for her to drink.
- Child: Cup drink.



Importance of learning about theories

- Foundation for teaching strategies and philosophies
- Teacher expectations



questions

- Next: specific research related to theories and Deaf people