

FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION



Theories of first
language
acquisition



Issues in first
language
acquisition

Language Acquisition

- ❖ Children acquire language through a subconscious process. They are unaware of grammatical rules.
- ❖ To acquire language, the learner needs a source of *natural communication*. The emphasis is on the text of the communication and not on the form or structure.



Language Learning

- ❖ Research has shown that knowing grammar rules does not necessarily result in good speaking or writing: Usage versus use.
- ❖ A student who has memorized the rules of the language might succeed on a standardized test of English language (competence), but may not be able to speak or write correctly (performance)





THEORIES OF FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION



BEHAVIORISTIC APPROACH

- ❖ Behaviorists consider effective language behavior to be the production of *correct responses to stimuli*. The need to use language is stimulated and language is uttered in response to stimuli.
- ❖ **B.F. Skinner** is the best known behaviorist who speculated that children are *conditioned* by their *environment* to respond to certain stimuli with language.



THE NATIVIST APPROACH

- ❖ Noam Chomsky, the father of most nativist theories of language acquisition, claims that children are born with a hard-wired **Language Acquisition Device (LAD)** in their brains.
- ❖ **Universal grammar** says that all languages have the same basic structure, and that specific languages have rules that transform these structures into the specific patterns found in given languages.

- All Homo sapiens are born with a LAD
- Only Homo sapiens have a LAD



FUNTIONAL APPROACHES

Cognition and Language
Development



Social Interaction and
Language Development



Cognition and Language Development

Piaget described whole development as a result of children's interaction with their environment. There is a complementary interaction between their developing perceptual cognitive capacities and their linguistic experience.



Social Interaction and Language Development

This theory is an approach to language acquisition that *stresses the environment and the context* in which the language is being learned.

This approach to language acquisition is based on *culture and environment*. Vocabulary is bound by context to the culture.





ISSUES IN FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION



COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE

- ❖ Competence refers to one's underlying of a system, event, or fact; non observable ability to do something.
- ❖ Performance is the overtly observable and concrete manifestation or realization of competence. It is the actual doing of something.



COMPREHENSION AND PRODUCTION

They both can be aspects of performance and competence. It is thought that comprehension (listening and reading) can be associated with competence, while production (speaking, writing) are associated with performance.



NATURE OR NURTURE

- ❖ Nativists contend that a child is born with an innate knowledge of a language, and that this innate property is universal.
- ❖ However, it hasn't been proven that there are "language genes" in our genetic information.
- ❖ Environmental factors cannot be ignored.



LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

- ❖ The issue at stake is to determine how thought affects language, how language affects thought, and how linguists can best describe and explain the interaction of the two.
- ❖ There have been some positions on this such as that of Piaget, who claimed that cognitive development is at the center of human organisms and that language depends on cognitive development.



IMITATION

Research has shown that echoing is a particularly salient strategy in early language learning and an important aspect of early phonological acquisition.

Children imitate the surface structure of the language.



PRACTICE

- ✓ Children like to play with language.
- ✓ Practicing a language involves speaking and comprehension practice.



INPUT



The speech that young children hear is primarily the speech heard in home.

Also, children acquire the language from overhearing the conversations of others, from listening to the radio, watching TV or work with some objects.



DISCOURSE

The child will learn how to initiate a conversation and give responses.

The child will identify whether he is being requested for information, for an action, or for help.





Thank
you!