



TITLE

WHAT IS LANGUAGE ACQUISITION?

KEY IDEA

Language acquisition as a human process that emerges from the interaction of biological and the environment

CONSPECTUS

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5. Conclusion

Humans are prepared for language regardless of the modality. A constant and appropriate language input is indispensable for hearing and deaf children, since the birth.

REFERENCES

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OBJECTIVES

- You can **recognize** what language acquisition is.
- You can **identify** the difference among first-language acquisition and second-language acquisition.
- You can **list** two main principles in first-language acquisition.
- You can **recognize** why deaf children are able to acquire language in the same way as hearing children.

FULL TEXT

1. Introduction

Language acquisition is the way by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive language and produce words or signs and sentences, to communicate.

2. Key idea

Language Acquisition as a human process that emerges from the interaction of biological influences and the environment.



3. Reasons

3.1. Language acquisition usually refers to first-language acquisition. First-language acquisition is the infants' acquisition of their native language (vocal language or signed language).

Second-language acquisition is the acquisition of additional languages, in both children and adults.

3.2. There are two main principles in first-language acquisition:

Speech/sign understanding precedes speech/sign production.

Children acquire a language step by step.

3.3. The use of language requires a range of tools, like vocabulary. Human language capacity is located in the brain. This capacity qualifies human beings to say and comprehend an infinite number of sentences. Language acquisition implies a linguistic input.

Linguistic input is defined as the words, contexts, and other forms of language to which a learner is exposed, relative to acquired proficiency in first or second languages.

3.4. Language acquisition process places two main questions:

How does a learner take linguistic inputs and converts them into abstract rules and representations?

How are language and language structures acquired? This is, how are these capacities picked up by infants from the linguistic input?

Concerning these questions there are different theories based in biological or environment explanations. Actually we believe that language acquisition is a cognitive process that emerges from the interaction of biological and the environment. Both of these influences work together with regard to children's language acquisition.

4. Consequences

4.1. Research findings indicate that first-language acquisition is similar on deaf and hearing babies.



4.2. Research also indicates that both, hearing and deaf babies, babble in the same way, during first six month of life. Both use vocal babbling and manual babbling. After that they continue babbling. Hearing babies with the voice and deaf babies with the hands. But, for that, they need an appropriate linguistic input, in order to assure the continuity of their language acquisition process. A vocal language for hearing children and a sign language for deaf children.

4.3. First-language acquisition process happens on its own as long as there is a language around. Every child can learn any language without any effort.

Research also suggests that there is a critical age for language acquisition without the need for special teaching or learning. During this critical period, language learning proceeds easily.

This is why it is so important for parents to engage their infants in language since birth. Attending to singularity of deaf children, it is an imperative to assure this language input in a sign language environment.

5. Conclusion

Humans are biologically prepared for language regardless of the modality (vocal or signed). This is why language acquisition by deaf children and hearing children are parallel, if they have an adequate language environment. A constant and appropriate language input is indispensable for hearing and deaf children, since the birth.