

Hold on, are those three early linguistic schools of thought?

Behaviourists



Early theories of language acquisition were influenced by behaviourists such as B.F. Skinner and Ivan Pavlov. Behaviourists viewed languages as sets of actions that typically elicited rewards or punishments. Consequently, rewards for speaking correctly, were reinforced. Alternatively, a lack of reward generally suppressed the linguistic behavior. Early linguists proposed that mimicry or repetition was crucial in language learning. However, by the 1970s, theorists generally concluded that behaviourism lacked concrete evidence to support behavior-based language learning.

Innatists

Popularized by Noam Chomsky's concept of Universal Grammar, innatists believe that all human beings possess an innate capacity for language learning, contrary to the behaviourist idea that children are born as blank slates (*tabula rasa*). Because of this, Chomsky argues that we should focus on the similarities of languages as opposed to their differences.

Chomsky's generative grammar theories draw heavily from the idea of creativity, stating that "from a finite set of rules within a speaker's competence, an infinite set of sentences could be generated (Meyers, 2009)." Universal Grammar is one of the most highly contested theories in linguistics, as proponents argue it is too vague and downplays the role of communicative function, pragmatics, and social context in shaping language and its acquisition.



Krashen's Monitor Model

Stephen Krashen proposes that language *acquisition* mirrors first language development, occurring through exposure to comprehensible input without conscious focus on grammar. On the other hand, we *learn* through conscious attention to language rules. Krashen insists that we acquire language far more than we learn. Second language learners use their acquired knowledge during spontaneous communication, potentially employing *learned* rules as a self-correction mechanism to refine their output.

Krashen also posits that language learners acquire language when the content is just above their current level, ($i + 1$). Learners need to be exposed to language that is mostly familiar but also contains some new elements (vocabulary, grammar) that they can figure out through context.

Further, Krashen's affective filter hypothesis suggests that even with substantial exposure to understandable language input, language acquisition isn't guaranteed for everyone. This theory aims to explain why some individuals don't acquire language effectively despite ample comprehensible input. Barriers such as disinterest, anxiety, and boredom might filter out input, making acquisition difficult.

