



UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR

“THEORY OF THE GENETICALLY BASED
LANGUAGE FACULTY” (CHOMSKY 2017, P. 3)

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BACKGROUND

- Philosophy(rationalism, eg.René Descartes)
- Natural science (eg. physics and chemistry)
- Biolinguistics(Chomsky rejects the radical behaviorist psychology of B. F. Skinner, who viewed as a completely learned product)

WHAT IS UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR

- A theoretical concept proposed by Noam Chomsky
- The human brain contains an innate mental grammar that helps humans acquire language
- All languages possess the same set of categories and relations

PRINCIPLES AND PARAMETERS

Examples:

- head-initial(in the left; eg. English)
- head-final (in the right; eg. Japanese)
- Mixture of head-initial and head-final (Chinese)

FRAMEWORK

- A finite set of fundamental principles that are common to all languages
- A finite set of parameters that determine syntactic variability amongst languages (eg. pro-drop parameter)

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

- To explain the apparent gap between linguistic knowledge and linguistic competency (David Adger, 2003)
- Exposure to language merely triggers the parameters to adopt the correct setting
- Poverty of the stimulus (POS)-Sentences children hear while learning a language does not contain the information needed to develop a thorough understanding of the grammar of the language (Chomsky, 1980)

HYPOTHESIS OF LANGUAGE EVOLVEMENT

- faculty of language exist in non-human animals
- the faculty of language in the broad sense came to be specialized for humans
- the faculty of language in the narrow sense (FLn) is unique to humans (most closely one to Chomsky's theory)

CRITICISMS

- pseudoscientific (Geoffrey Sampson, 2005)
- Language Acquisition Device (LAD)
- no coherent formulation and unnecessary (Hinzen, 2012)
- conflict with biology (Hinzen, 2012)
- There are no linguistic universals (Hinzen, 2012)

LIMITATION

- Insufficient for second language acquisition
- The scope is narrow
- UG is distinct from particular grammar

ENLIGHTENMENT IN ESL TEACHING

- Allow students to apply rules of their native language into English learning
- Encourage students to explore similarities and dissimilarities between L1 and L2

REFERENCES

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THANK YOU