



Department of
Education

Year 12 ATAR Psychology

Language Development



OTHERS –
Communication

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Year 12 ATAR Psychology

OTHERS – Communication

Language Development

Instructions to Students

This resource package provides you with learning materials for the Psychology ATAR Year 12 course. The package focuses on the **Topic OTHERS – Communication-Language Development**.

This package is designed to support the program you are completing at your school. If feedback is required when completing this package, you should consult your teacher.

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This section is designed to develop the knowledge component of the syllabus. It also includes focus questions and activities to support your understanding. 2

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It is recommended that students further investigate concepts covered in this resource package by conducting their own research using the text/s that they use at school or the internet.

Syllabus Points Covered

- *features and limitations of theories of language development*
 - *innate and learned behaviours – Chomsky, Bruner*

Learning Content and Activities

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Language is a cognition that truly makes us human. There is no other species known to date that can express infinite ideas (sentences) with a limited set of symbols (speech sounds and words).

The two main theories of how language is developed are –

- The **nativist** perspective argues that humans are biologically programmed to gain knowledge. The main theorist associated with this perspective is **Chomsky**.
- The **interactionist** perspective argues that language development is both biological and social. Interactionists argue that language learning is influenced by the desire of children to communicate with others. **Bruner** is one of the main theorists associated with these views.

ACTIVITY ONE

1. Why do we need language? (In terms of psychology, why is language important?)

2. What is the importance of communication?

LANGUAGE IS INNATE – Chomsky

Chomsky (1968) proposed that **language was innate**. This means that language develops naturally so that everyone learned their native language. All humans have a **Language Acquisition Device (LAD)**, a mysterious black box that was hard-wired for language. **Universal rules** are used to distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical sentences (in any language). Surface structure rules described the grammatical structure of spoken language and deep structure rules enabled the production of grammatical sentences. People are genetically predisposed to learn a **universal grammar** and learn language naturally.

The theory assumes all children know language in advance (it is genetically predetermined) and that is why we acquire it so quickly. Children don't need people talking to them, only to hear the spoken language around them.

Evidence for Chomsky's theory –

- Children master language skills faster than other abilities
- Children do not simply copy language or learn phrases, they uncover rules and then create new and unlimited phrases
- Children still develop the correct grammar without being corrected by parents and adults
- Deep structures (universal grammar) is the same in all languages – he therefore assumed it is genetically determined.

Limitations of Chomsky's theory -

- Theory paid little attention to the social environment in which the child was learning language, except to acknowledge that the language used by the family and community provided the primary linguistic input
- Put too much emphasis on the innate predisposition of children to learn to speak and understand the language around them
- The concept of the LAD is very abstract and can't be scientifically tested

Other researchers proposed a more substantial role for the social environment with communication is a fundamental function of language.

ACTIVITY TWO

1. Watch the clip below on Chomsky and answer the following questions

Click here to view the video: www.youtube.com/embed/XyaDTxGC-wI

- a) What book did Chomsky publish in 1957 which changed thinking about language development?
 - b) How does Chomsky himself explain why, if language is innate, there are so many different languages around the world?
-
2. Explain, with reference to Chomsky's Theory of Language Development, how an English-speaking child will put the object of a sentence last (He drove a car) and a Japanese speaking child will put the object before the verb (He a car drove)?

LANGUAGE IS LEARNED – Bruner

Bruner (1983) proposed that language develops through parents talking to their children. He theorised that learning a language occurs through **shared activities and regular routines**. A **Language Acquisition Support System (LASS)** describes how parents' interaction with the child guided and supported their language acquisition. He proposed that children also learned the language of their particular social, historical and cultural group.

Bruner stated that **LASS requires LAD** and vice versa. LAD is the innate component where a child has the propensity to learn language. LASS is the social and instructional framework provided by adults that encourages the child to talk and learn language. Interaction of these frameworks requires scaffolding and reference.

His theory, unlike Chomsky, includes the social environment and helps to explain why children develop at different rates and proficiencies. Every child has a LASS, and particularly during the years of the language explosion (roughly ages 2 to 5), differences in the LASS significantly explain differences in language acquisition.

Evidence for Bruner's theory is demonstrated by the scaffolding and reference routines.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is the instructional part of the framework. **Parents encourage during familiar routines** and activities, such as bath time, mealtime, book reading, and playing games. Parents incrementally push or encourage the child to improve on their current capabilities. This includes expecting children to –

- Be more accurate with pronunciation
- Talk more
- Use more words
- Learn new meanings
- Use more grammatically correct sentences.

Eg. Initially a parent might accept any attempt at the word for water, but incrementally, they expect a closer attempt at the pronunciation until the child gets it correct - bababababa, gaga, wawa, wada, water. Then they expect water to be used in sentence.

Referencing

Referencing is the **non-linguistic methods** (pointing, nodding) to direct a child's attention so that language is associated with objects. Eg. The progression of reading picture books to story books and following the words with your finger.

This is also teaching a form of interaction that is part of learning to socialise and take turns when communicating. Garton & Pratt (1998) show the importance of reading in building language.

Scaffolding & Referencing Routines

The two processes work together during routines to develop the LASS. It follows the pattern of –

Reference

- joint attention is firstly established through eye contact
- then objects are introduced for the infant to look at
- looking is replaced by pointing
- these routines include talking, this associates the names of objects with the words that demonstrate their place in time and space
- using books pointing, reading and taking turns increases language skills.

Scaffolding

- the parent encourages the child to strive for greater and more accurate language use
- the parent becomes more particular in the language they accept.

ACTIVITY THREE

1. Complete the table below. Explain the key components that parents' employ to facilitate a child's language acquisition.

Strategy	Description	Example
Scaffolding		
Referencing		
Joint Attention		
Routines		

Additional Resources

Textbook work

If you have access to *Nelson Psychology WA ATAR Unit 3&4*, complete the following:

- read textbook pages 73-78, complete end of chapter questions on page 80 - Terminology 4-5, MCQ 4-5 and SAQ 4

If you have access to *Nelson Psychology WA ATAR Unit 3&4 student workbook*, complete the following:

- read and complete pages 84-86.

Additional Reading/Weblinks

Check out the additional reading in the following links to help you clarify your understanding.

- Noam Chomsky on language Acquisition:
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/7Cgpfw4z8cw>
- What is Universal Grammar? <https://www.youtube.com/embed/xfiHd6DyuTU>
- BBC Documentary-Why do we talk?
<https://www.dailymotion.com/embed/video/x40jndd>
- Bruner: <https://languagefix.wordpress.com/tag/language-acquisition-support-system/>
- Language Acquisition theories:
<http://www.simplypsychology.org/language.html>

Past Examination Questions

Answer the following questions taken from the 2017 ATAR Psychology 12 exam paper:

Source: SCSA - <https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/further-resources/past-atar-course-exams/psychology-past-atar-course-exams>

Question 9 (continued)

- (d) (i) Name the key theorist associated with the innate theory of language acquisition. (1 mark)

- (ii) Name the key theorist associated with the learned theory of language acquisition. (1 mark)

- (e) (i) Outline three features of the innate theory of language. (3 marks)

One: _____

Two: _____

Three: _____

- (ii) Outline two limitations of the innate theory of language. (2 marks)

One: _____

Two: _____

Answer the following questions taken from 2019 ATAR Psychology 12 exam paper

Source: SCSA - <https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/further-resources/past-atar-course-exams/psychology-past-atar-course-exams>

- (c) Describe the 'restricted code' as proposed by Bernstein. (2 marks)

- (d) State the key idea behind Chomsky's theory of language development. (1 mark)

According to Chomsky's theory, the Language Acquisition Device plays a role in language development.

- (e) Explain the concept of the Language Acquisition Device. (3 marks)

The Language Acquisition Device relies on the concept of grammatical rules, both surface structure and deep structure.

- (f) Explain the difference between these two types of grammatical rules. (2 marks)

ACTIVITY ANSWERS

ACTIVITY ONE

1. Why do we need language? (In terms of Psychology, why is language important?)
To communicate with each other
2. What is the importance of communication?
It is a tool of socialisation required for learning, developing social relationships and carrying daily life transactions such as shopping, working

ACTIVITY TWO

1. Watch the YouTube clip (below) on Chomsky and answer the following questions
www.youtube.com/embed/XyaDTxGC-wI
 - a) In 1957 what book did he publish which changed thinking about language development?
Syntactic Structures
 - b) How does Chomsky himself explain why if language is innate there are so many different languages around the world?
The variation between languages is in fact superficially. All languages are in fact very similar and share the same governing rules.
2. Explain, with reference to Chomsky's Theory of Language Development, how an English-speaking child will put the object of a sentence last (He drove a car) and a Japanese speaking child will put the object before the verb (He a car drove)?
Universal Grammar
All Human languages have the same grammatical building blocks – nouns, verbs, subjects and objects, negations and questions. Set of linguistic parameters/rules for every language
No language is unlearnable therefore Chomsky believed we have a language acquisition capacity called the "Language Acquisition Device" or LAD
So we are all born with the ability – however we learn how to generate sentences correctly from our environment.
Relation to question – why Japanese and English different structure if language is in built. Both have universal principles: Verbs and Objects, but the environment they grew up in designed what order they are delivered in.

ACTIVITY THREE

1. Complete the table below explain the key components of parents employ to facilitate a child's language acquisition.

Strategy	Description	Example
Scaffolding	the deliberate use of language at a level that is slightly beyond what children can comprehend. A framework to support language	Expansion occurs when an adult takes a child's utterance and expands on its complexity. For example, when a child might utter something like <i>Felix eated</i> , the parent might expand on the complexity, adding <i>Yes, that's right, Felix ate his dinner</i> . Notice here that the parent has also corrected the child's grammar, changing <i>eated</i> to its appropriate past tense form, <i>ate</i> .
Referencing	the use of language or non-linguistic means to manage and direct the attention of others	begins with directing attention like turning head or pointing, using words like "here" "this"
Joint Attention	sustained eye contact between a parent and a child, or a parent and a child and an object, to encourage language development.	pointing at items and objects to draw attention
Routines	Familiar activities and formats used to assist language development	meal and bath times

EXAM PRACTICE QUESTIONS- ANSWERS

Source: SCSA - <https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/further-resources/past-atar-course-exams/psychology-past-atar-course-exams>

Question 9 (continued)

- (d) (i) Name the key theorist associated with the innate theory of language acquisition. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
Chomsky	1
Total	1

- (ii) Name the key theorist associated with the learned theory of language acquisition. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
Bruner	1
Total	1

- (e) (i) Outline **three** features of the innate theory of language. (3 marks)

Description	Marks
One mark for each feature	
Answers could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people are born with Language Acquisition Device • there are universal rules of grammar • language output based on input from the environment • surface rules for each spoken language. 	1–3
Total	3

- (ii) Outline **two** limitations of the innate theory of language. (2 marks)

Description	Marks
Lack of attention to social aspect of language	1
LAD is an abstract concept with little scientific evidence	1
Total	2

- (e) Explain the concept of the Language Acquisition Device. (3 marks)

Description	Marks
Theoretical black box hardwired for language	1
Receives native language around child as input	1
Reproduces this as output	1
Total	3
Note: Response must indicate black box is theoretical for full marks.	

- (f) Explain the difference between these two types of grammatical rules. (2 marks)

Description	Marks
Deep structure rules are those which apply to all spoken languages	1
Surface structure rules can vary between languages	1
Total	2