

# Social Interactionist Theory: How We Learn Language Together

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Social Interactionist Theory is number of proven hypotheses of language acquisition methods in which a variety of its forms including written, spoken, or visual as a social tool consisting of a complex system of symbols and rules on the question of language acquisition and development--the compromise between "nature" and "nurture" is the "Interactionist" approach which demands a particular type of syntagma in recognizing that many factors influence language development.

### **Initial stages**

The Social Interactionist approach to language acquisition research has focused on three areas, namely the cognitive approach to language acquisition or the developmental cognitive theory of Jean Piaget, the information processing approach or the information processing model of Brian MacWhinney and Elizabeth Bates (the competition model), and the social interactionist approach or social interaction model of Lev Vygotsky (socio-cultural theory). Although the initial research was essentially descriptive in an attempt to describe language development from the stand point of social development, more recently, researchers have been attempting to explain a few varieties of acquisition in which learner factors lead to differential acquisition by the process of socialization; called the theory of "social interactionist approach".

### **Socio-cultural theory**

Vygotsky, a psychologist and social constructivist, laid the foundation for the interactionists view of language acquisition. According to Vygotsky, social interaction plays an important role in the learning process and proposed the zone of proximal development (ZPD) where learners construct the new language through socially mediated interaction. Although Vygotsky's social-development theory was proposed many years ago, it has then begun to serve as a foundation for the interactionists approaches to language acquisition recently and as the social interactionists model in recent years.

In contrast to the theoretical modalities in behaviourism, the approach to language acquisition emphasizing that children are conditioned to learn language by a stimulus-response pattern, the social interactionist approaches rest on the premises of both the Nativist and the Empiricist approaches.

It levels an outline of a language acquisition theory in combining of both the traditional behavioral and linguistic position in language production; the essentials of this theory, which differentiate it from a semantically based theory, are that the deepest level of representation specifies the communicative intent primarily and semantic content secondarily. Thus, within this theory the language acquisition can easily be realized differently in emphasizing the role of the environment in producing such differences, as is most often the case in child language and not infrequently the case in adult language. It is incumbent on this model as on any serious attempt to provide a theory

of language acquisition, to answer questions about how the model accounts for changes in the child's knowledge with development, and how the model can be different to account for the adult's language system.

And as the behavioral approaches view that children as passive beneficiaries of the language training techniques employed by their parents and the linguistic approaches view that children as active language processors of whose maturing neural systems guide development; conversely, social integrationists communication enjoys a rather curious position in contemporary theories of language acquisition as a dynamic system where typically children cue their parents in to supplying the appropriate language experience that children require for language advancement. In essence, it turns in supplying of supportive communicative structure that allows efficient communication despite its primitives.

This field of language acquisition has been studied from many angles as such and primarily concerned with the environment in which language learning takes place. From the subset of the perspective by and large neutral as to the role of innateness, it is also compatible with a model of learning that posits as such mechanism must interact with the environment in order to mature. It suggests, for example, that innate linguistic mechanism alone cannot explain children's mastery of language, and that what is intended is that the relationship of interaction to acquisition per se does not entirely depend on whether there is or is not an innate mechanism that guides the learning task; also suggesting that the linguistic competence goes beyond conditioning and imitation to include also nonlinguistic aspect of interactions.

### **Current strand**

Social-interactionists, such as Catherine Snow, theorize that adults play an important part in children's language acquisition (see Moerk, E. L., 1992; also: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1128444>). However, some researchers claim that the empirical data on which theories of social interactionism are based have often been over-representative of middle class American and European parent-child interactions. Various anthropological studies of other human cultures, as well as anecdotal evidence from western families, suggests rather that many, if not the majority, of the world's children are not spoken to in a manner akin to traditional language lessons, but nevertheless grow up to be fully fluent language users. Many researchers now take this into account in their analyses.

Nevertheless, Snow's criticisms might be powerful against Chomsky's argument, if the argument from the poverty of stimulus were indeed an argument about degenerate stimulus, but it is not. The argument from the poverty of stimulus is that there are principles of grammar that cannot be learned on the basis of positive input alone, however complete and grammatical that evidence is. This argument is not vulnerable to objection based on evidence from interaction studies such as Snow's, but it is vulnerable to the clear evidence of the availability of negative input given by

conversation analysis. In addition, meta-analysis has shown that there is a large amount of corrections made to language produced by children. Moerk (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of 40 studies and found substantial evidence that corrections do indeed play a role. From this work, corrections are not only abundant but contingent on the mistakes of the child. (see behavior analysis of child development).

### **Relational frame theory**

The relational frame theory (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, Roche, 2001), provides a wholly selectionist/learning account of the origin and development of language competence and complexity. Based upon the principles of Skinnerian behaviorism, RFT posits that children acquire language purely through interacting with the environment. RFT theorists introduced the concept of functional contextualism in language learning, which emphasizes the importance of predicting and influencing psychological events, such as thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, by focusing on manipulable variables in their context. RFT distinguishes itself from Skinner's work by identifying and defining a particular type of operant conditioning known as derived relational responding, a learning process that to date appears to occur only in humans possessing a capacity for language. Empirical studies supporting the predictions of RFT suggest that children learn language via a system of inherent reinforcements, challenging the view that language acquisition is based upon innate, language-specific cognitive capacities.