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<i>The study of Language</i> by George Yule	المصادر والمراجع
<i>What is Linguistics</i> by John Lyons	
<i>Linguistics</i> by Jean Aitchison	

محتوى المحاضرة

First Language Acquisition

Basic Requirements for first Language Acquisition

First language acquisition is a complex process, and several basic requirements are necessary for a child to successfully acquire their first language. These requirements are not simply about having access to linguistic input; they also involve cognitive, social, and neurological factors. Below, I'll outline the essential elements for first language acquisition:

1. Exposure to Linguistic Input (Language Input)

- ✚ **Quantity and Quality of Input:** For first language acquisition to occur, a child must be exposed to language. The input they receive needs to be rich, varied, and consistent. This includes not just hearing words but also experiencing language in meaningful contexts. Infants need exposure to both spoken language and, eventually, the social context in which that language is used.

- ✦ **Social Interaction:** Language acquisition is not simply about hearing words; it also depends on **interaction** with caregivers, family members, and others. Active participation in conversations, even in nonverbal ways, helps infants learn the social aspects of language (such as turn-taking, using language for different purposes, and understanding context).

2. Cognitive Capacity

- ✦ **Innate Language Ability:** The theory of **universal grammar**, as proposed by Noam Chomsky and supported by John Lyons, argues that humans have an innate capacity for language. This means that children are born with a *language faculty*, a mental structure that allows them to process linguistic input and learn the rules of language effortlessly.
- ✦ **Cognitive Development:** The child's cognitive development must progress to the point where they can comprehend abstract concepts like categories (e.g., "dogs" and "cats" as animals) and relationships (e.g., cause and effect). This cognitive development supports the acquisition of more complex language structures such as negation, questions, and tense.

3. Social and Environmental Context

- ✦ **Interaction with Caregivers and Peers:** The social environment is crucial for language acquisition. Caregivers and peers are the primary sources of language input, and their interaction with the child plays a key role. **Joint attention**, where a caregiver and child focus on the same object or event, is a powerful tool for helping the child associate words with meanings.
- ✦ **Social Motivation:** Children are highly motivated to learn language because it helps them connect with the world and interact with others. **Social desire** to communicate plays a key role in motivating language learning. This social function of language—using it to express needs, desires, and emotions—drives children to practice and master language.

4. Neurological and Biological Factors

- ✦ **Brain Development:** The brain needs to be neurologically prepared for language acquisition. The left hemisphere of the brain is most heavily involved in language processing, and a child's brain must develop the appropriate neural pathways for recognizing sounds, forming words, and understanding grammar.
 - ✦ **Critical Period Hypothesis:** There is evidence to suggest that there is a **critical period** in early life when language acquisition occurs most easily, particularly up until around the age of 7. After this period, language learning can become much more difficult, though not impossible. This is partly due to the plasticity of the brain at a young age, allowing it to adapt quickly to linguistic input.
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5. Motivation and Emotional Factors

- ✚ **Emotional Bond with Caregivers:** Emotional connection plays a crucial role in language acquisition. The attachment a child has with their caregivers influences their ability to engage and learn from them. Children are more likely to pay attention to and imitate language when they feel emotionally safe and engaged in social interaction.
- ✚ **Desire to Communicate:** The child's desire to communicate with others—whether through gestures, sounds, or later words—drives the learning process. As children realize that language can help them get what they need, they become more motivated to use it.

6. Repetition and Practice

- ✚ **Repetition of Language Forms:** For children to internalize the rules of language, they need to hear and practice the forms repeatedly. For example, learning verb tenses or plural forms requires repeated exposure and practice until the child begins to apply them correctly in new contexts.
- ✚ **Active Engagement:** Children need to actively engage with their language environment. They learn language not only by hearing it but by using it themselves. This active practice, even in the early stages of babbling, helps solidify their understanding of sound patterns and later grammar.

7. Feedback and Correction (Indirect)

- ✚ **Indirect Correction:** While formal correction (e.g., adults explicitly pointing out errors) is not usually effective, **recasting**—where adults repeat a child's utterance using the correct form—can help children refine their understanding of grammar and syntax. For example, if a child says “I goed,” an adult might respond, “You went to the park.”
- ✚ **Positive Reinforcement:** Positive reinforcement, such as praise and encouragement, can help children feel motivated to keep practicing and using language in their environment

8. Exposure to Speech Sounds (Phonetic Input)

- ✚ **Listening to Speech:** Children need exposure to the specific sounds of their language in order to develop an understanding of phonemes (the smallest units of sound). Infants begin to distinguish between the sounds of their language (phonemic awareness) around 6 months of age, and they use this knowledge to produce their first words and syllables.
- ✚ **Development of Phonetic Motor Skills:** Children also need to develop the ability to produce speech sounds correctly. This requires **motor coordination** between the vocal cords, tongue, lips, and other speech apparatus, which is developed through practice and repetition.

First language acquisition is a complex process that depends on a variety of factors, from cognitive and neurological readiness to exposure to rich linguistic input and social interaction. For a child to successfully acquire their first language, they need a supportive environment that provides both the **input** and the **motivation** to use that input in meaningful ways.