### How Do Children Acquire Language?

#### Skinner vs. Chomsky

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B.F. Skinner (Behavioral Psychology)</th>
<th>Noam Chomsky (Linguist)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Give me a child and I will shape him into anything.”</td>
<td>“Children develop language because they’re pre-programmed to do this.”</td>
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- **Language acquisition is nothing more than association, imitation, and reinforcement.**
- **Learning a language operates on the same principles that a rat will use to learn a maze or to learn to press a button.**
- **Children learn grammar through reinforcement. Correct grammar is positively reinforced so it is repeated; incorrect grammar is negatively reinforced so it is not used again.**
- **To understand how language is acquired, you have to be able to observe it**
- **Grammar and sentence structure are learned through positive and negative reinforcement**
- **All language, include innermost thoughts, is a behavior that is learned like any other skill**
- **children must be taught all aspects of language**
- **Children learn the rules of their native language by imitating what they hear in their environment**

- **A child learns language too quickly for the process to be dependent on only straight-forward learning**
- **Language is too complex to be learned one sentence at a time**
- **It’s not true that children only learn language from what they hear and experience, because a lot of kids say things they have never heard before.**
- **Language is one of the key characteristics that separates humans from all other animals.**
- **Humans are born with the instinct or "innate facility" for acquiring language**
- **There is no way that a child can obtain a language from only it’s teachers (i.e. parents) and environment**
- **No one had to specifically teach you the grammar of your native language; when you began speaking as an infant, you automatically produced utterances that were grammatical in your native language.**
- **A great deal of creativity occurs in child grammatical utterances. This creativity is very important.**
- **“Language is a process of free creation.”**

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**Example**: To understand language acquisition, you must observe how children learn grammar through reinforcement. Correct grammar is positively reinforced so it is repeated, whereas incorrect grammar is negatively reinforced and thus not used again.