

February 4, 2013

Day 5: Argument for Mental Grammar

-Jackendoff does not argue for mental grammar through children but rather makes the argument for the ability to make infinite novel sentences.

I. Argument for innate knowledge

a. The way that children learn language suggests that the human brain/mind is genetically predisposed to learn a language.

b. How do children become native speakers?

1) Parents explicitly teach them?

2) Imitation?

3) Positive/Negative Reinforcement?

Ex. Scarf- parents do not simply teach their children words because it would be difficult to know what they were referring to, could be referring to the color purple.

II. Can children apply the plural rule to new words? How early?

a. ex. The "wug" experiment, proved that children have a productive rule because they could make the word plural without having heard it before.

b. ex. Mouses vs mice

c. Way to become a native speaker: figure out patterns, construct your own mental grammar

III. Language learning= natural ability

a. Part of human biology

b. Language Universals

i. Ex. Negations

ii. No language forms negations/questions by reversing the order of words. If you tried to teach it by reversing it then it would be unnatural.