

Language acquisition at different ages

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ABSTRACT

Amongst the various properties in which humans differs from any other species, it is perhaps the ability to convert thoughts, feelings and wishes into soundwaves, to transmit those to the others and thus to influence their thoughts, feelings and wishes, and eventually their behaviour, which is most fundamental. It is language which allows human beings an orientation in their environment different from that of a monad in a world defined by the laws of restabilised harmony, different from that of an ant in a world ruled by the rigid interaction principles of the anthem. The verbal transmission of all sorts of theoretical and practical knowledge handed down from one generation to the next, on the one hand, and of rapidly changing, situation-bound information, on the other, sets the stage for that particular type of behaviour which we consider to be human. It is language which makes possible all higher forms of cognition as well as that particular kind of interaction between members of a species which is characteristic of human beings. We can imagine a "mind" without language, but surely not a human mind without language. We are not born with a language in our head. No new-born child knows English, Chinese, or French. At birth, the child is literally an "infans"-someone who does not speak. But every new-born is able to learn English, Chinese, French, or any other language spoken in the social environment in which he (or she) grows up. We all learn one language in the first years of our life - our mother tongue. But the capacity to acquire a language does not disappear with childhood. In this paper we will research language acquisition at different ages, difference between first and second language acquisition as well as whether second language acquisition stops somewhere during our lives.