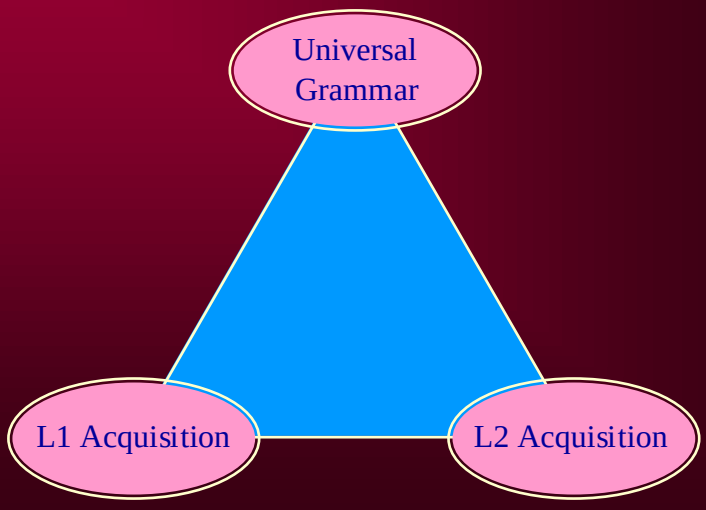
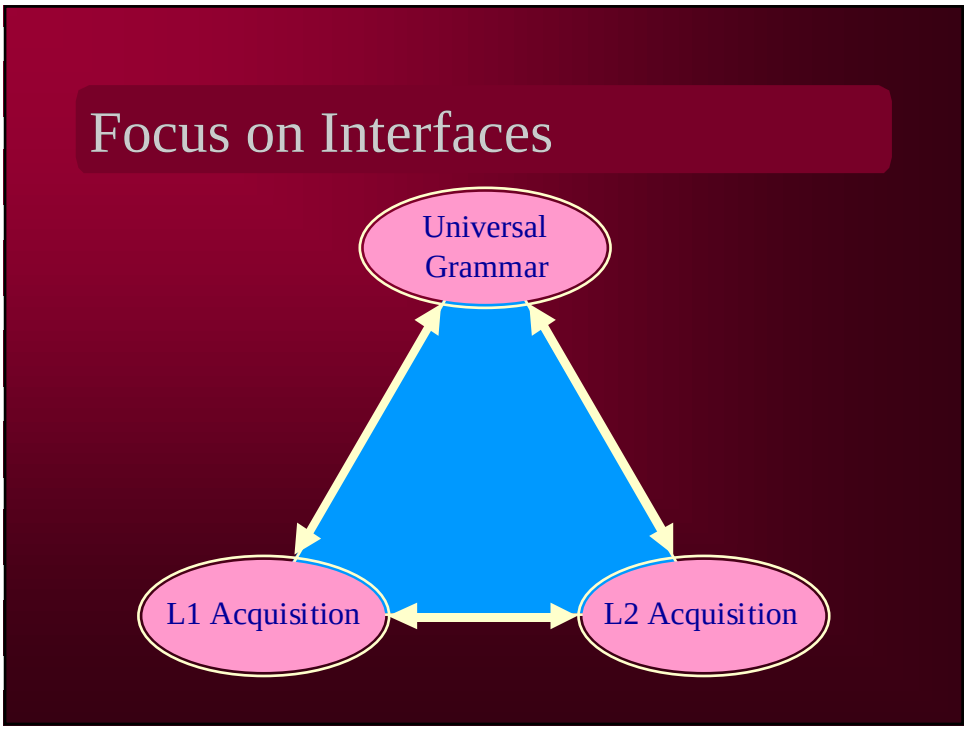
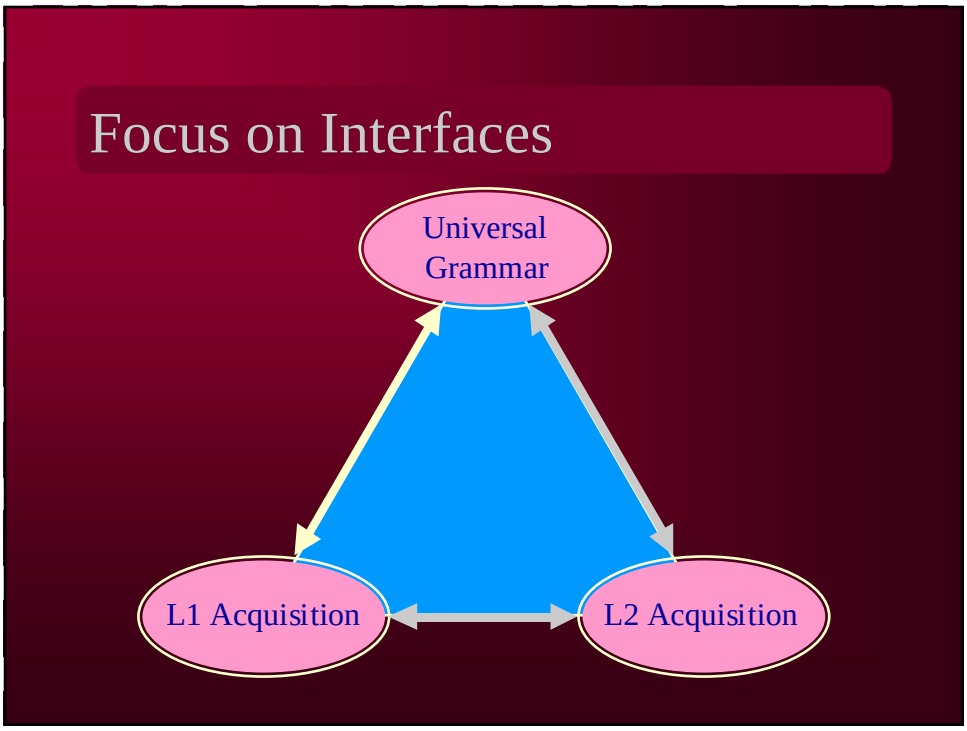
Language Acquisition and Universal Grammar

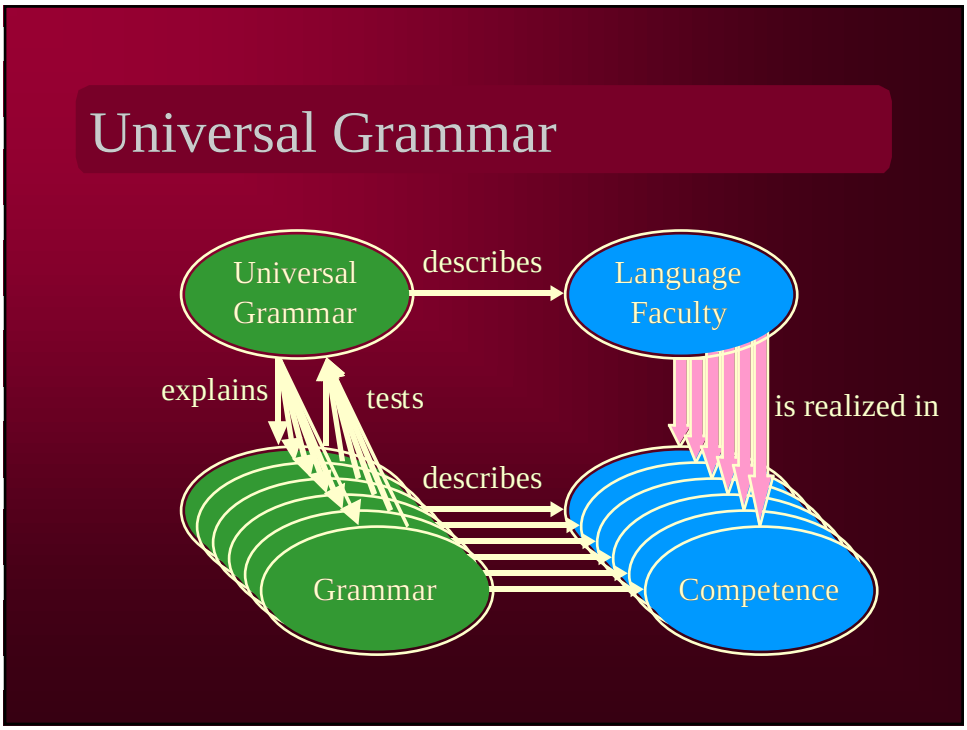
PD Dr. Pius ten Hacken

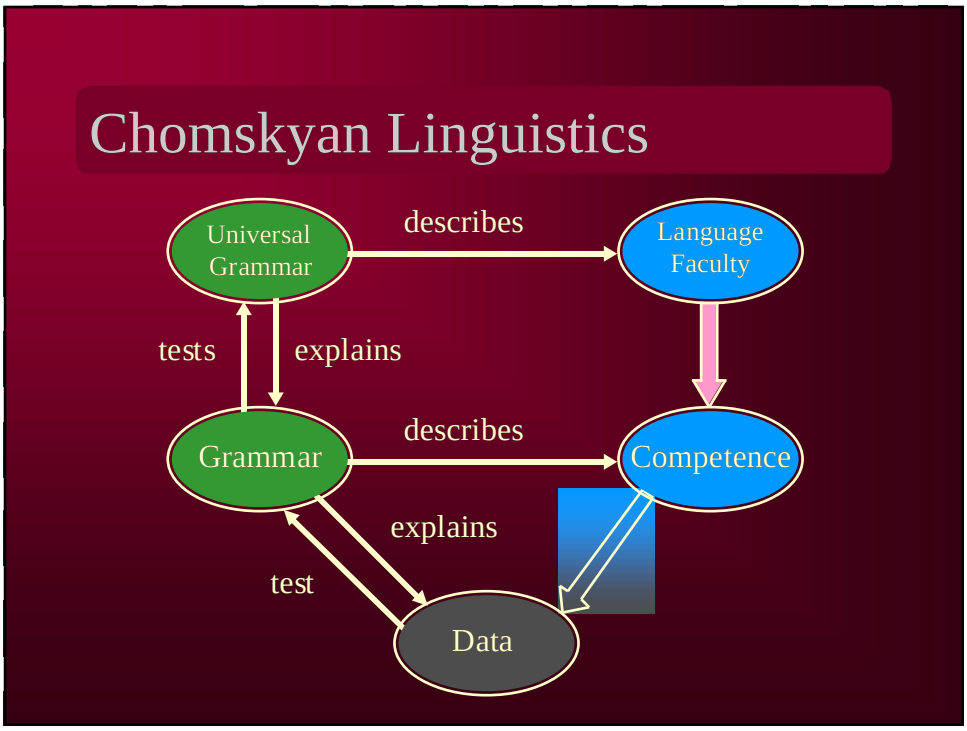
Three Areas of Interest








Universal Grammar
Universal Grammar
describes
Language Faculty
explains
tests
is realized in
describes
Grammar
Competence


Chomskyan Linguistics
Universal Grammar
describes
Language Faculty
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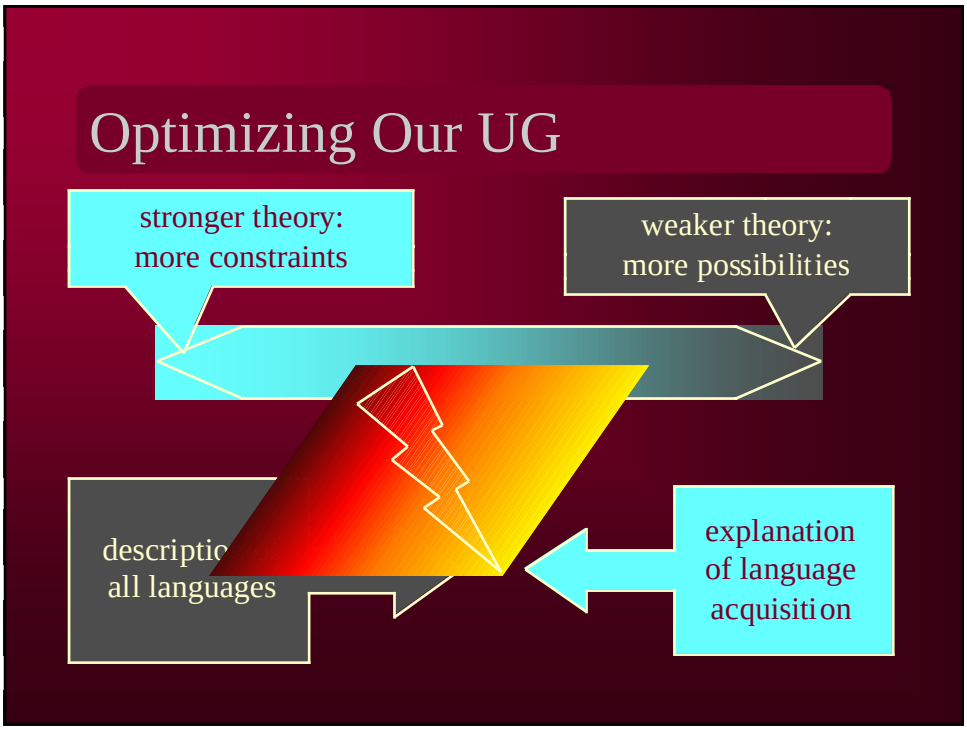
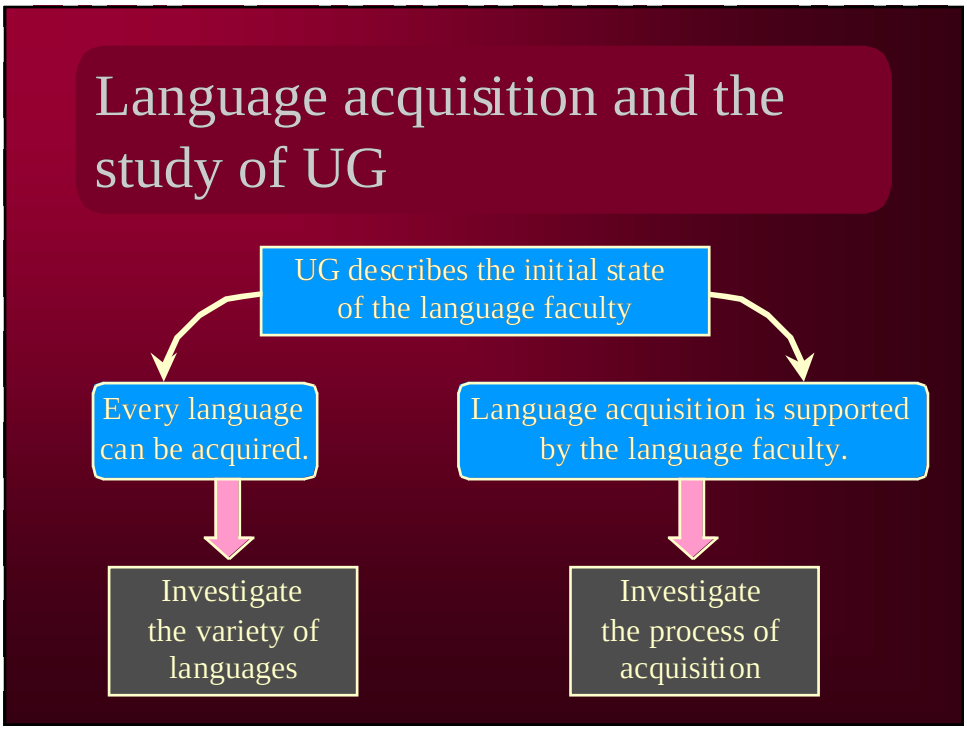
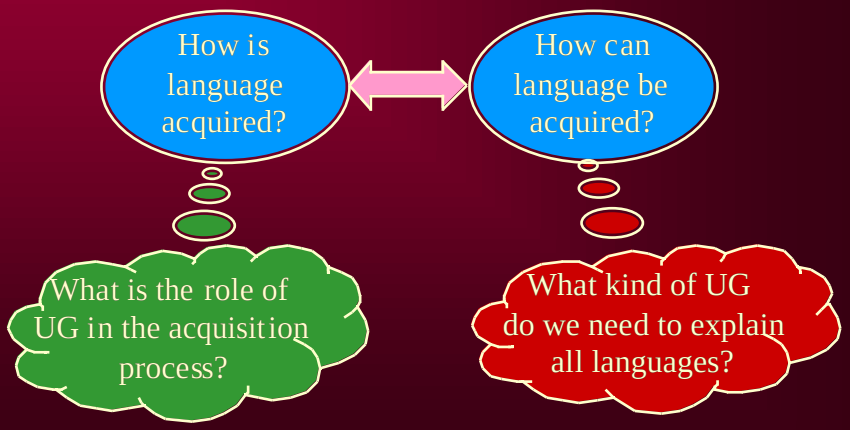
Competence
explains
test
Data





Logical vs. Practical Problems



Models of Language Acquisition

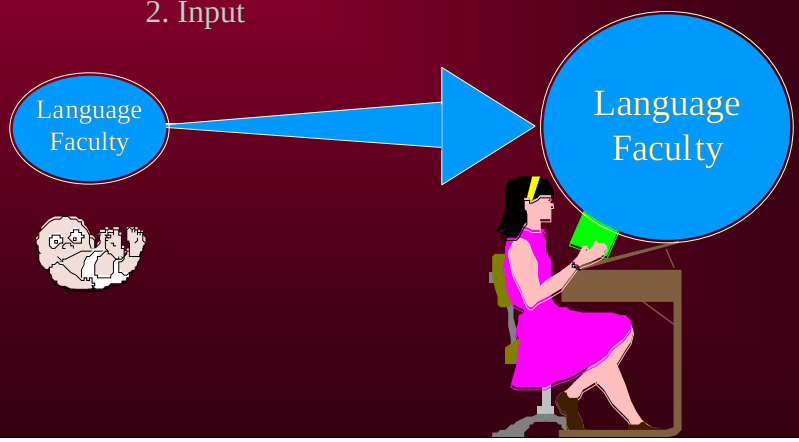
- UG-Constrained Maturation
- Strong Continuity
- General Nativism
- Bioprogram

The Language Acquisition Process

1. Growth
2. Input

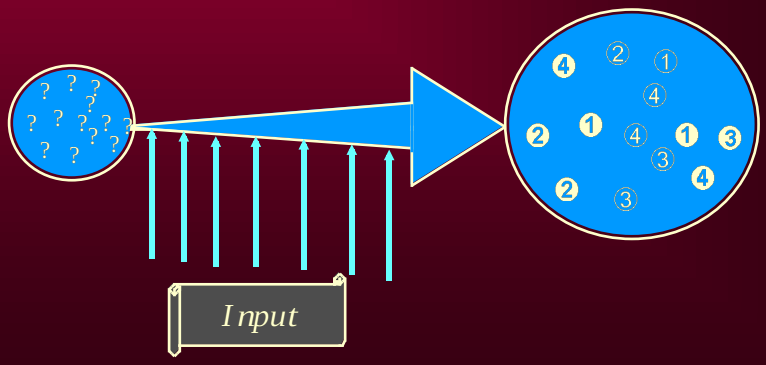
The Language Acquisition Process

1. Growth: genetically determined
2. Input



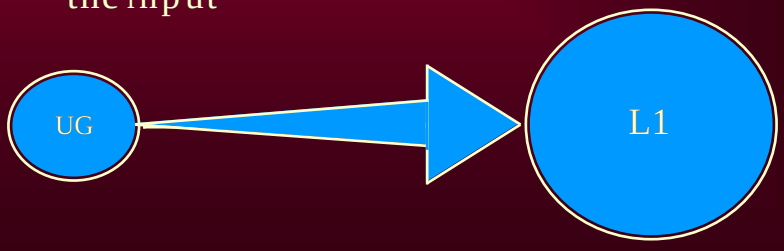
The Language Acquisition Process

1. Growth: genetically determined
2. Input ⇒ Parameter setting



Maturation

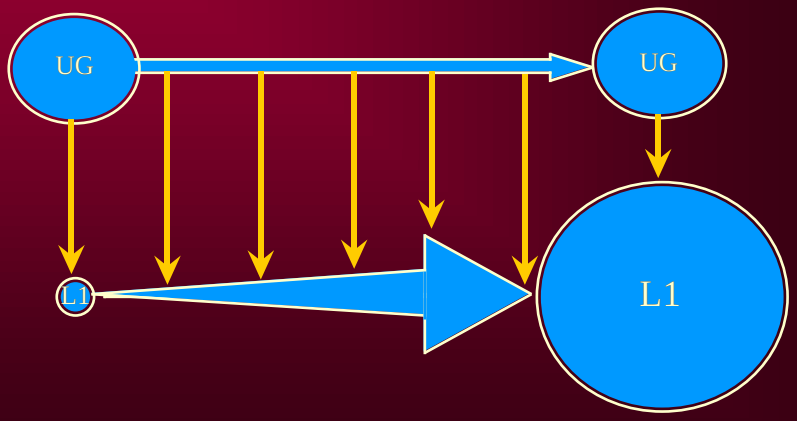
- Two separate processes:
  - development of UG as part of the genetically determined growth of the brain
  - parameter setting under the influence of the input

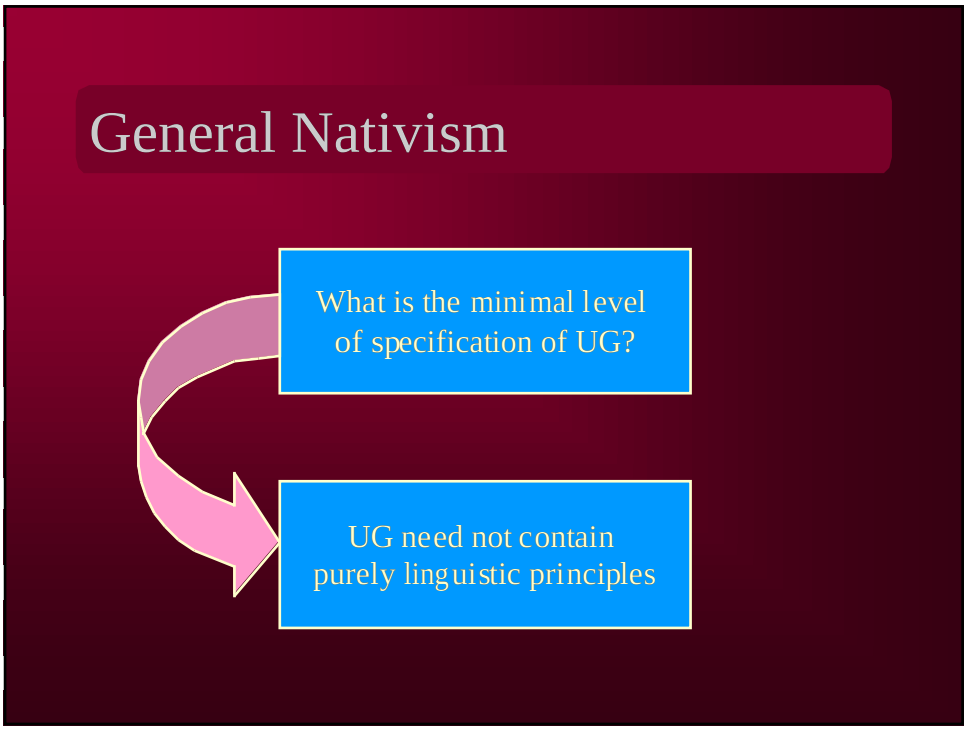


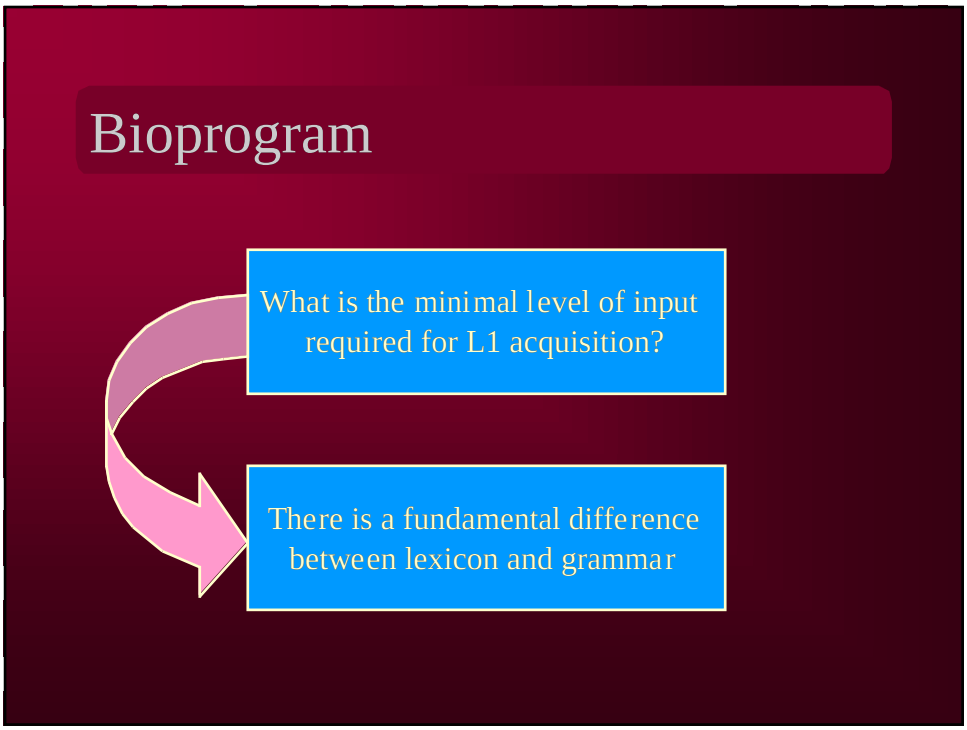
Continuity

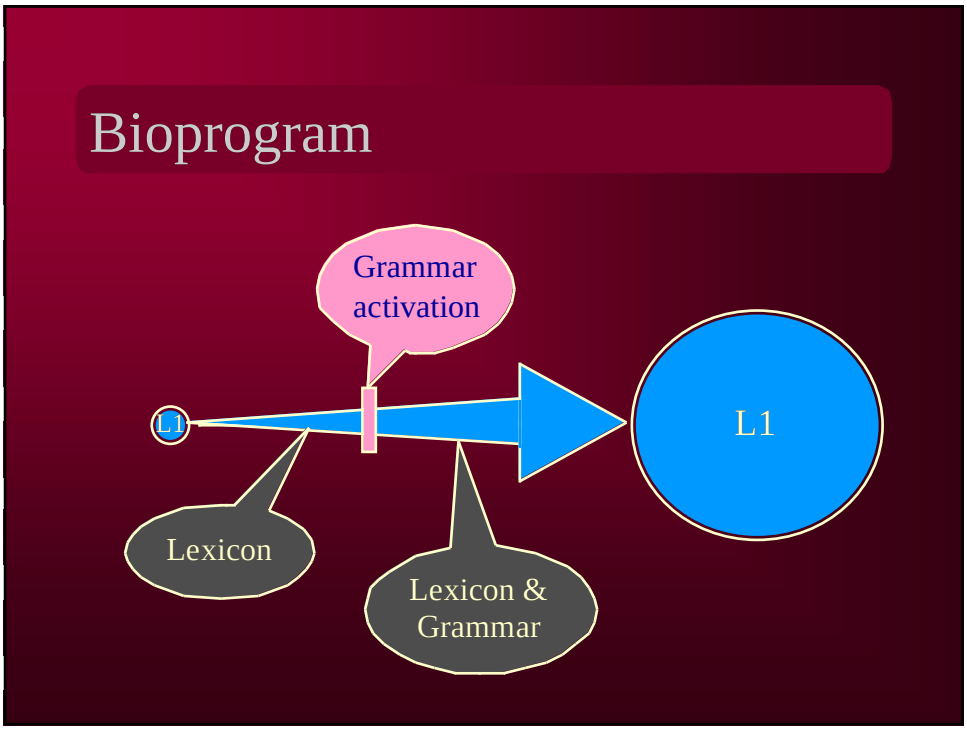
- Two different modules:
  - UG remains constant and guides the acquisition process.
  - L1 grammar develops in acquisition.

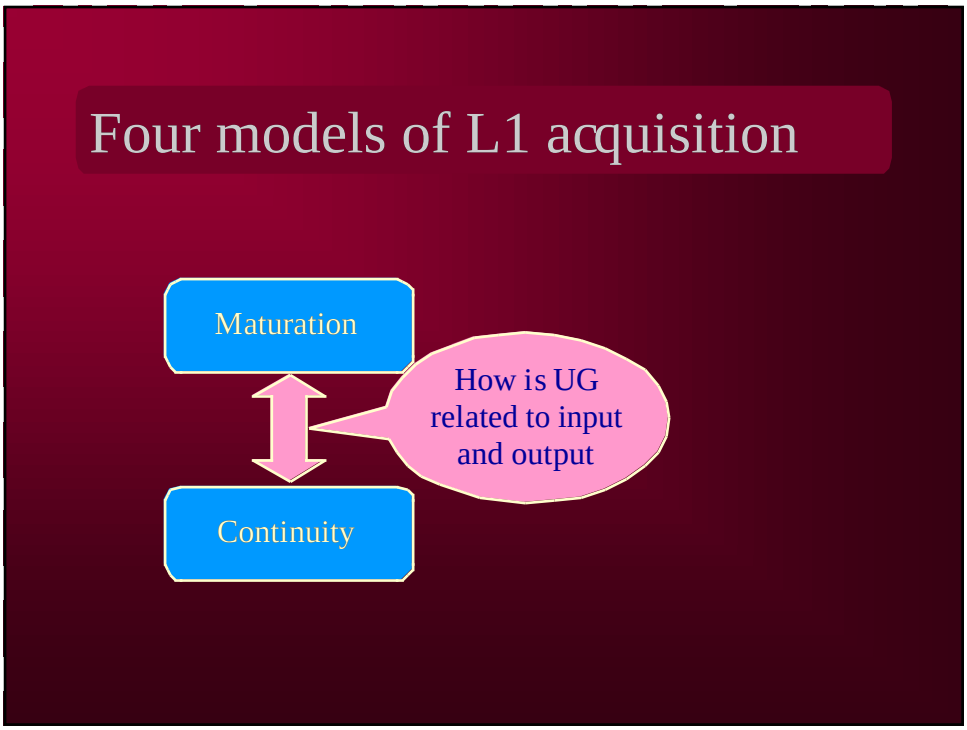
Continuity

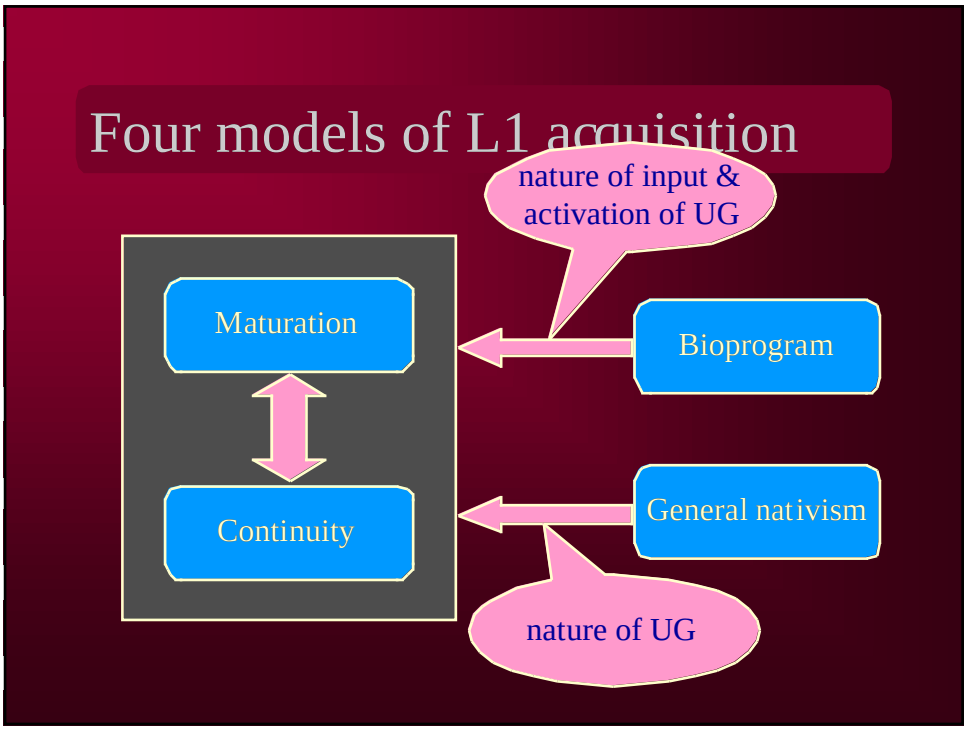






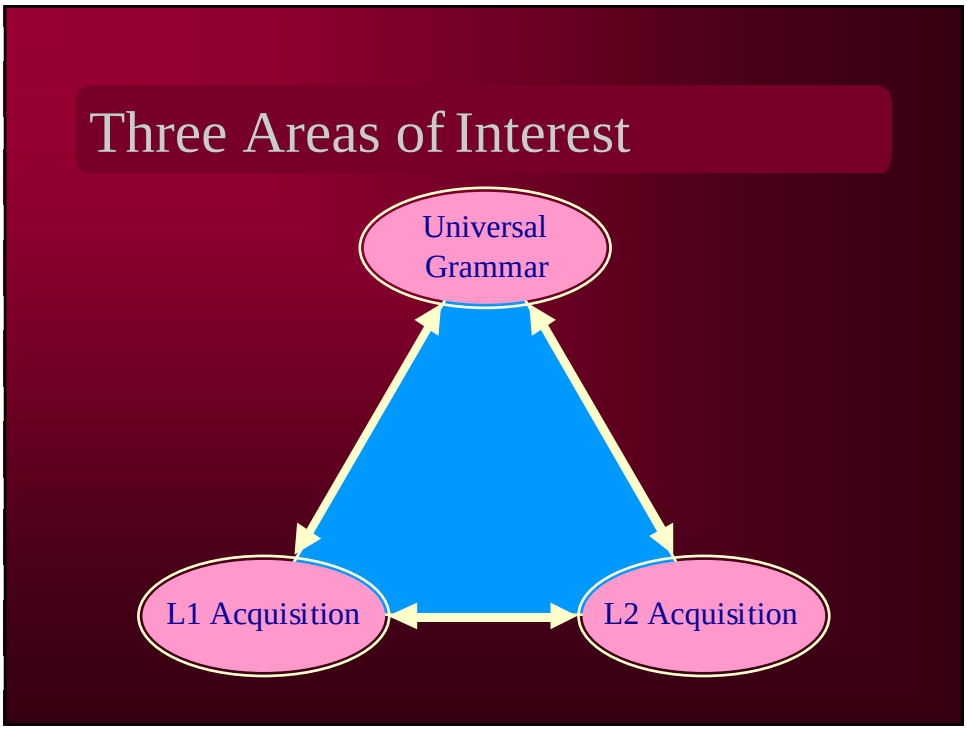

Bioprogram
Grammar activation
L1
L1
Lexicon
Lexicon & Grammar

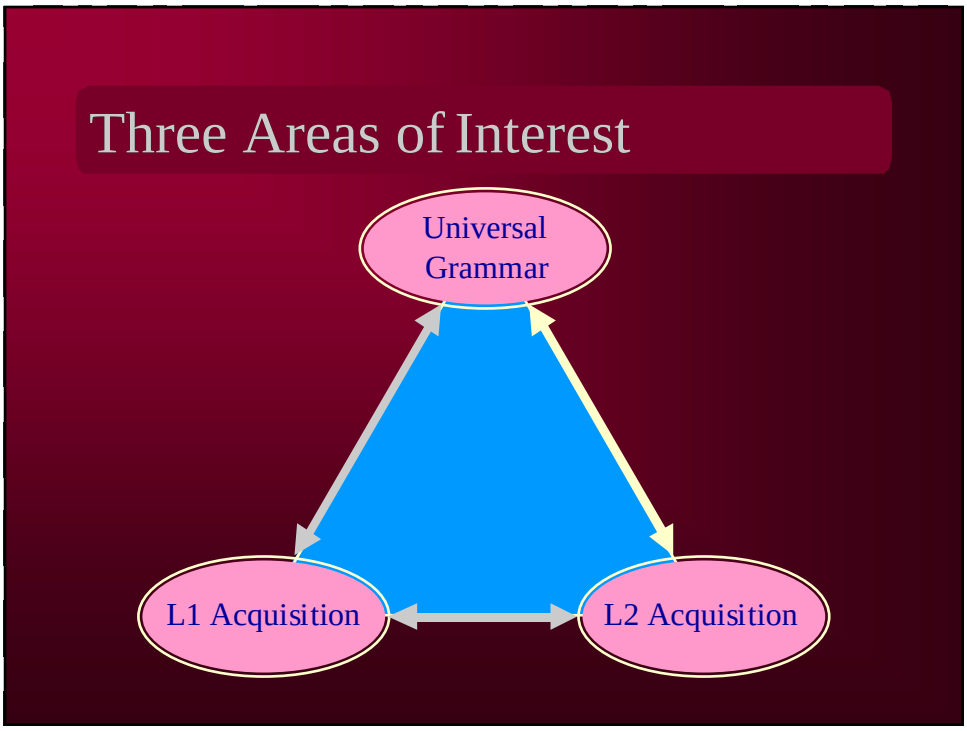

Four models of L1 acquisition
Maturation
How is UG related to input and output
Continuity



Evidence for the models

- Elements of the acquisition process
  - X-bar Theory, functional projections
  - Extended Projection Principle, obligatory subject
  - Binding Theory
- Collection and interpretation of data
  - child's perspective
  - linguist's perspective



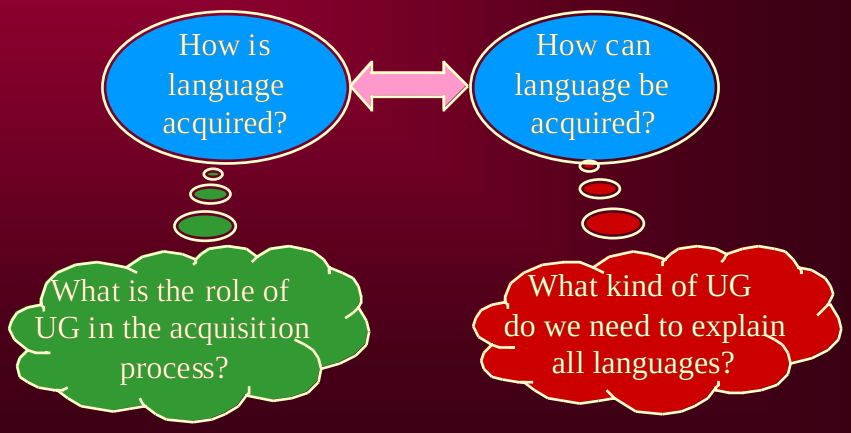


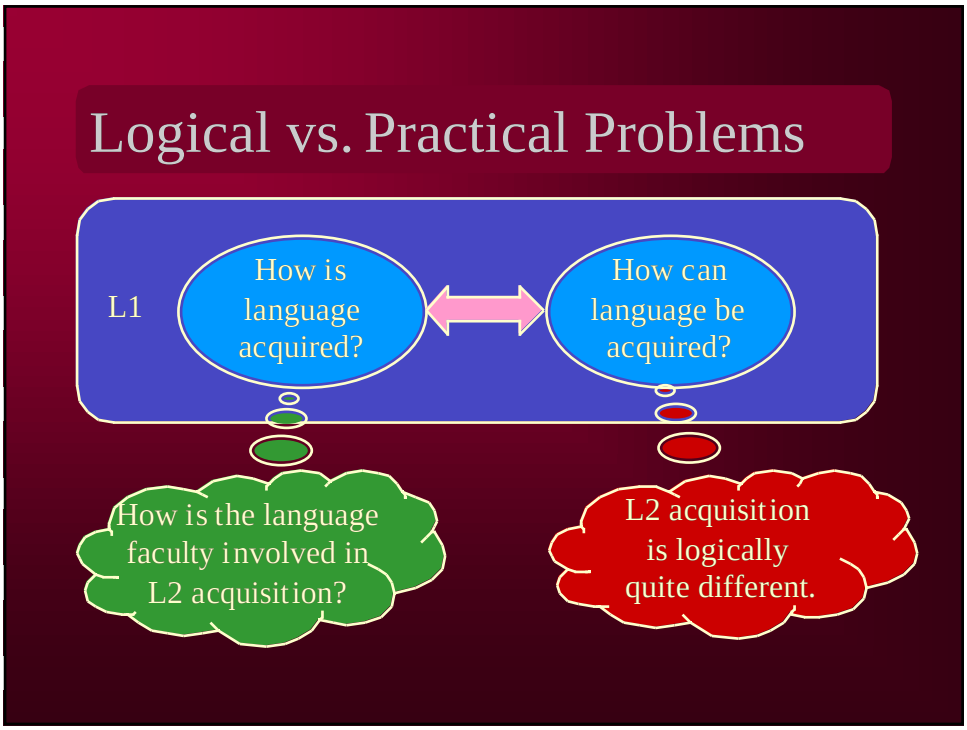
Aims of Chomskyan Linguistics

- Explain language data.
- Describe a speaker's knowledge of language by means of a grammar.
- Explain linguistic competence.
- Describe the human language faculty.

L2 acquisition?

Logical vs. Practical Problems





Factors involved in L1 and L2 acquisition

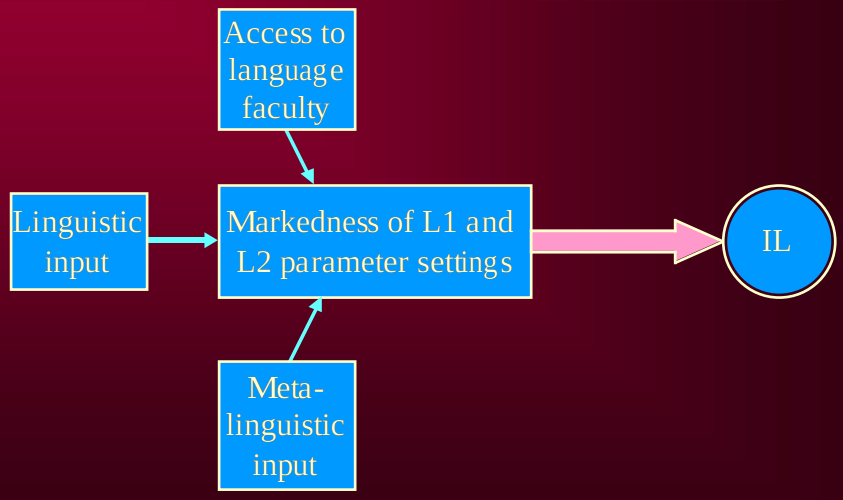
L1 acquisition:

- Language faculty
- Markedness
- Linguistic input

L2 acquisition:

- Language faculty
  - how?
  - to what extent?
- Markedness
  - relative to L1
- Linguistic input
  - including meta-linguistic input

Markedness and L2 Acquisition



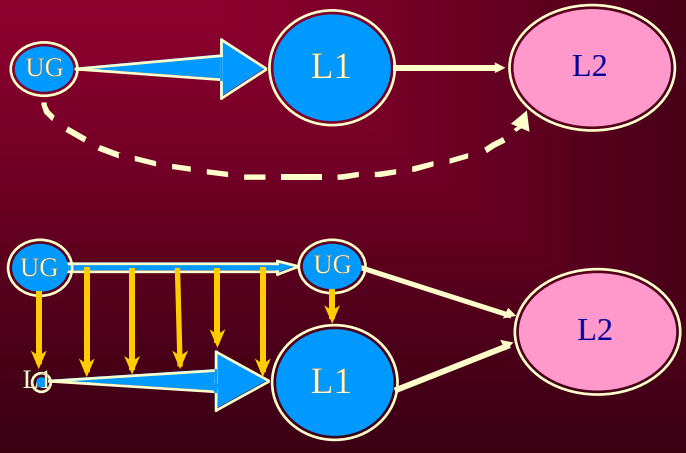
Three models of L2 acquisition

- Partial access, through L1
- Full access, parameter setting
- No access, fundamental difference

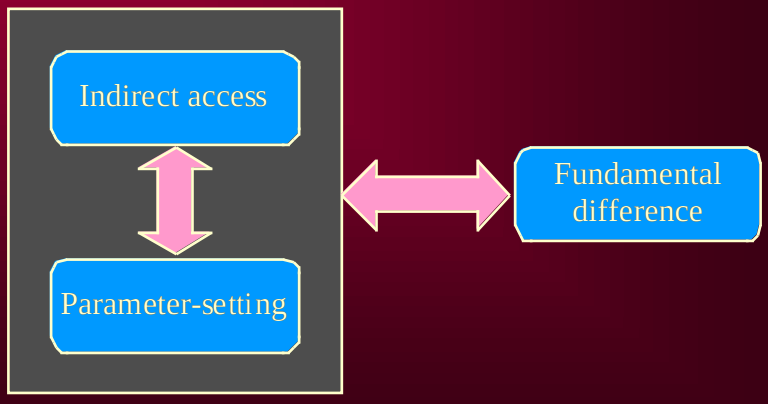
L2 vs. L1 acquisition

- What is the starting knowledge?
  - full cognitive development
  - knowledge of L1
- Why not or rarely as successful as L1 acquisition?
- What is the acquisition device?

Results of L1 acquisition

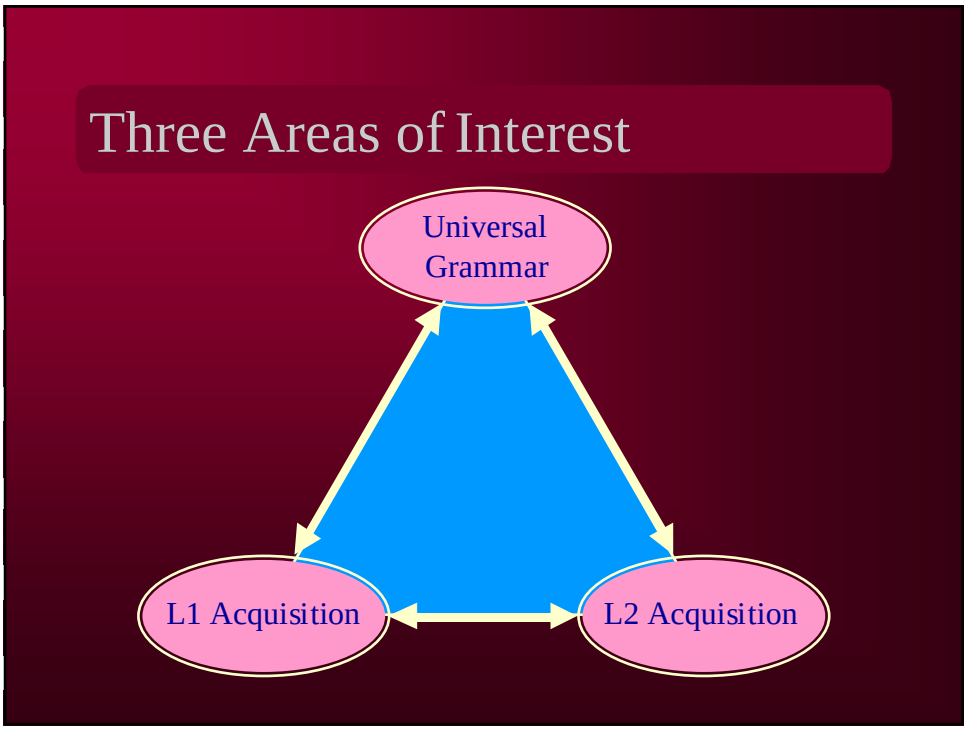


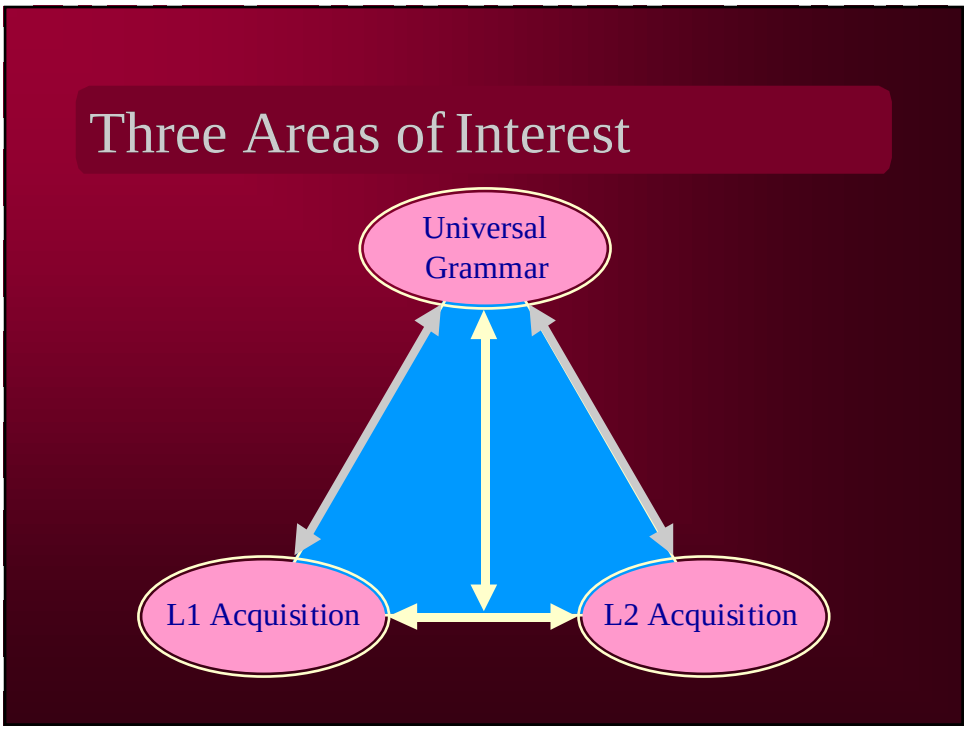
Three models of L2 acquisition



Evidence for the models

- Elements of the acquisition process
  - negation and V-movement: functional categories
  - word order: functional categories
  - constraints on movement
- Collection and interpretation of data
  - elicitation vs. naturalistic data
  - grammaticality judgements





Interaction of L1 and L2

- Bilingual language acquisition
  - when does the child split the two systems?
- Code mixing
  - what are the linguistic constraints?
- Transfer
  - when and how?

Additional data on the nature of UG
Evidence for the choice between models

Conclusion

- Acquisition data for the study of UG
  - data of different types
- Explanation of acquisition process
- Application in problematic cases
  - L2 acquisition methods
  - L1 problems (aphasia etc.)
  - support for bilingual acquisition