

Language Acquisition and Universal Grammar

PD Dr. Pius ten Hacken

Two views of language



Competence vs. Performance

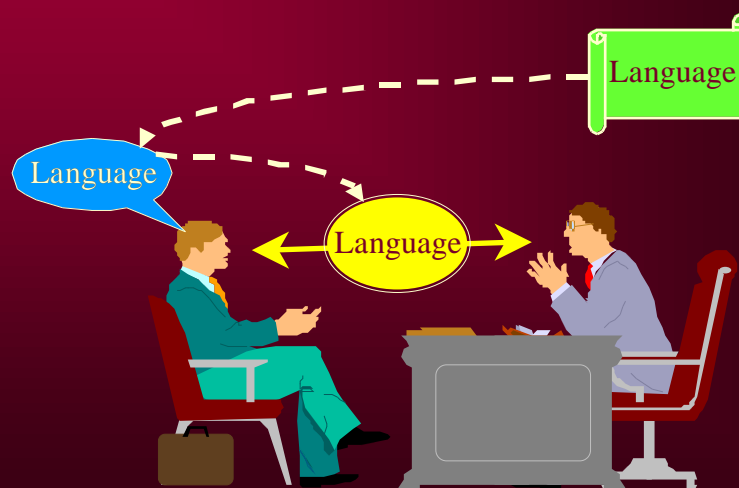
Competence

- knowledge of a particular speaker
- embodied in the mind/brain
- (relatively) systematic

Performance

- utterance in a particular situation
- acoustically perceptible
- subject to accidental and non-linguistic constraints

Three views of language



I-language vs. E-language

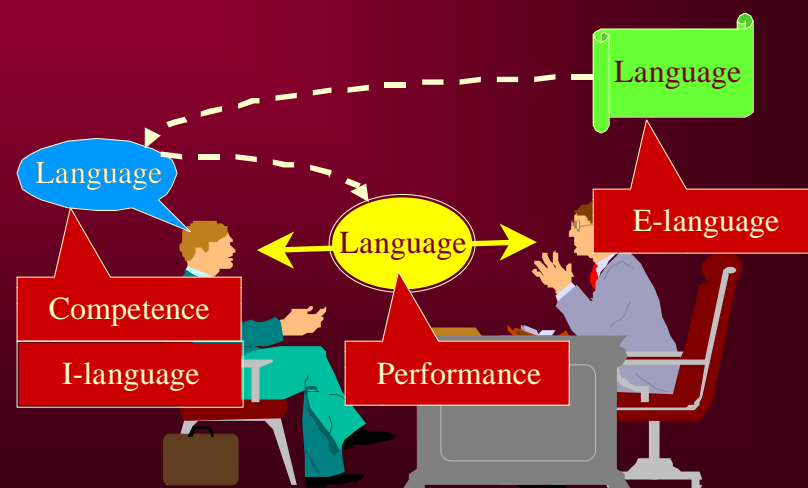
I(nternal) language

- knowledge of a particular speaker
- embodied in the mind/brain
- (relatively) systematic

E(xternal) language

- abstract notion
- set of grammatical sentences
- individual speakers have imperfect knowledge of it

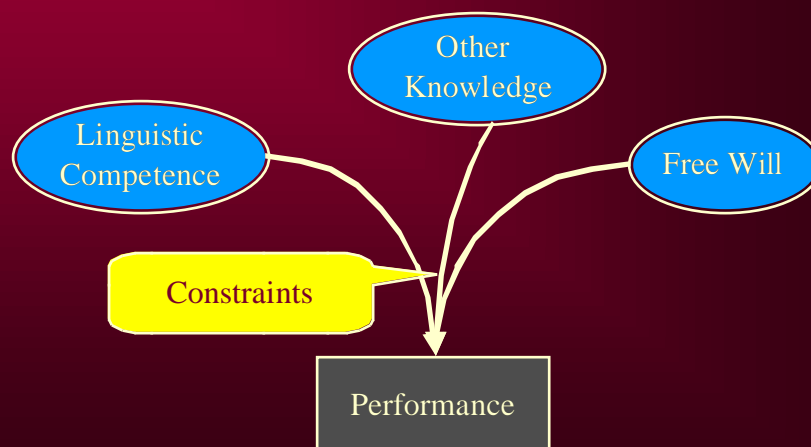
Three views of language



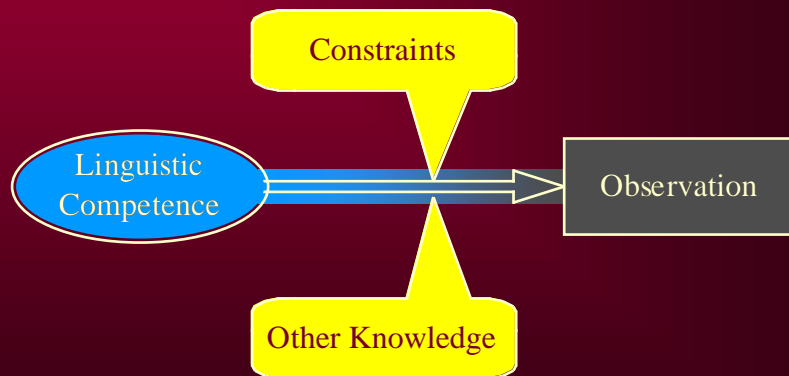
The role of a grammar

- A grammar describes a language.
- Performance:
 - highly irregular, what is an error?
- Competence/I-language:
 - mental state, how can we observe it?
- E-language:
 - abstract entity, how can we verify the description?

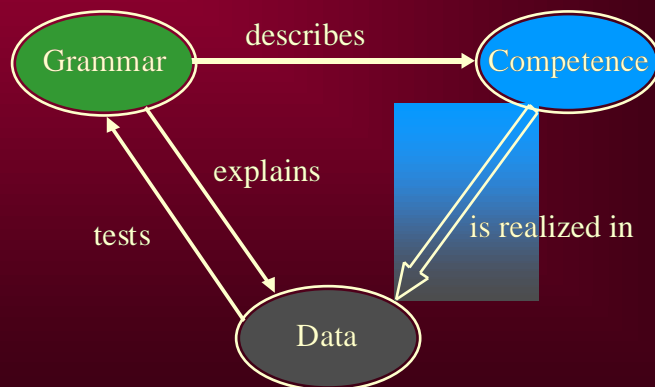
What we observe in performance



Observations of a mental state



Chomskyan linguistics

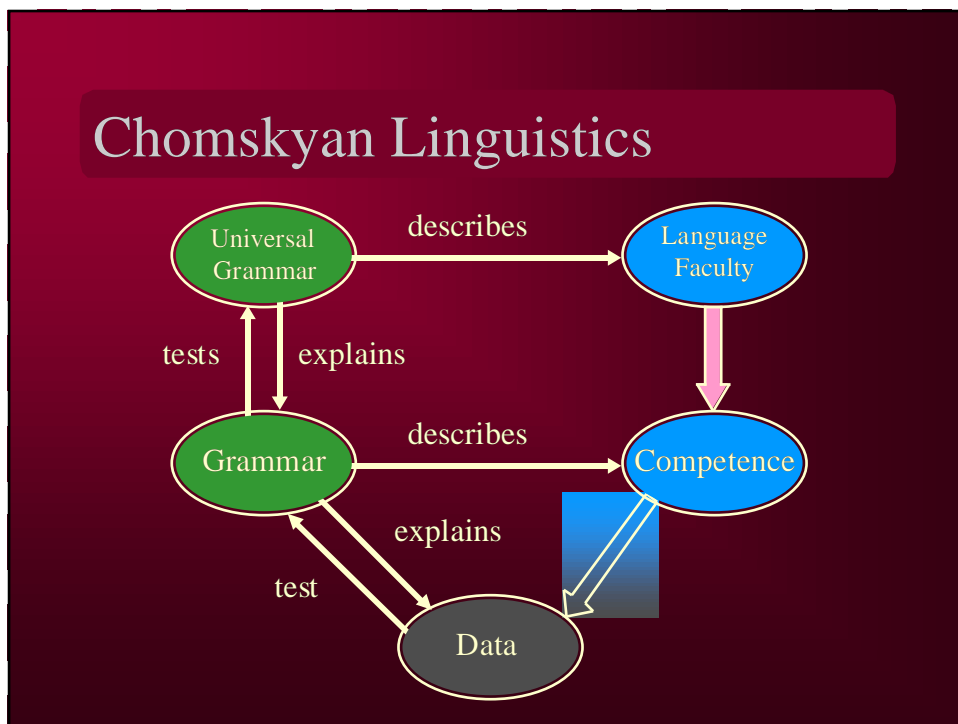
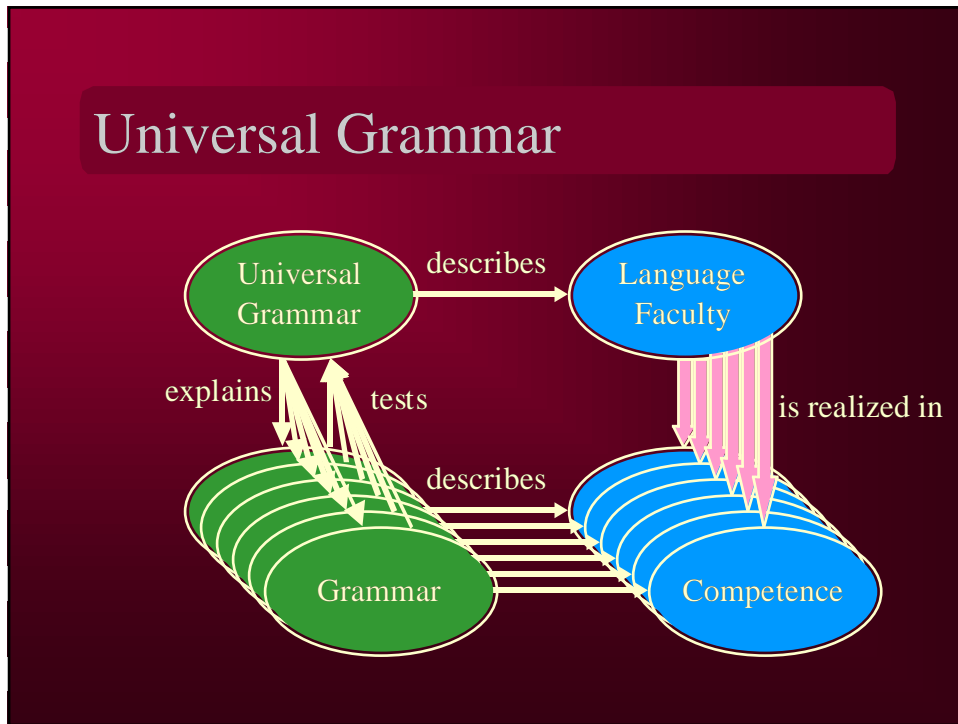


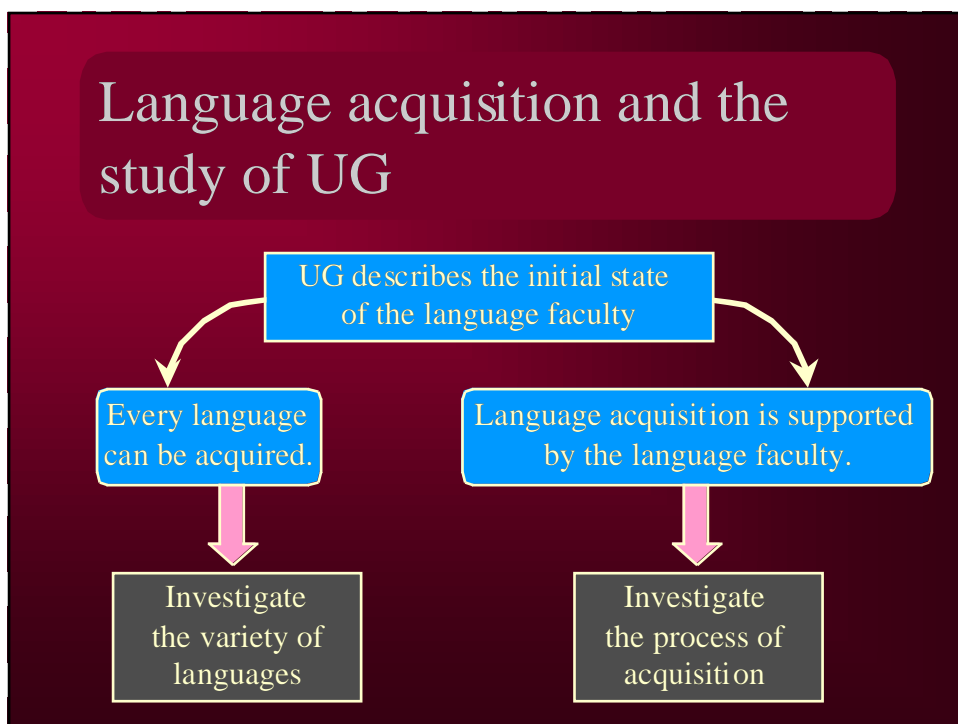
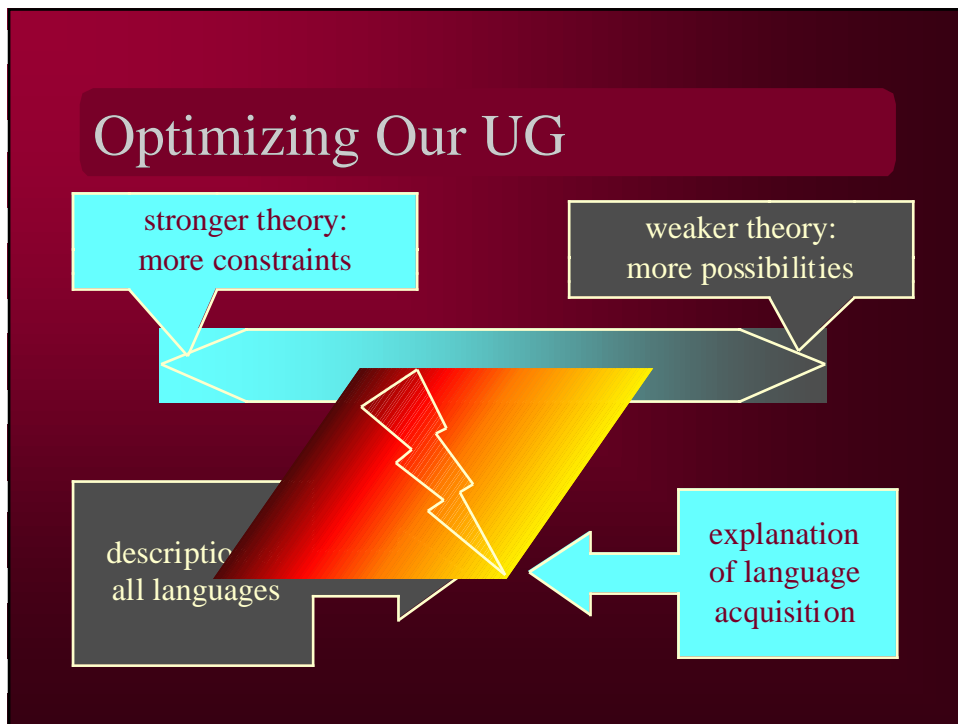
The problem of choice

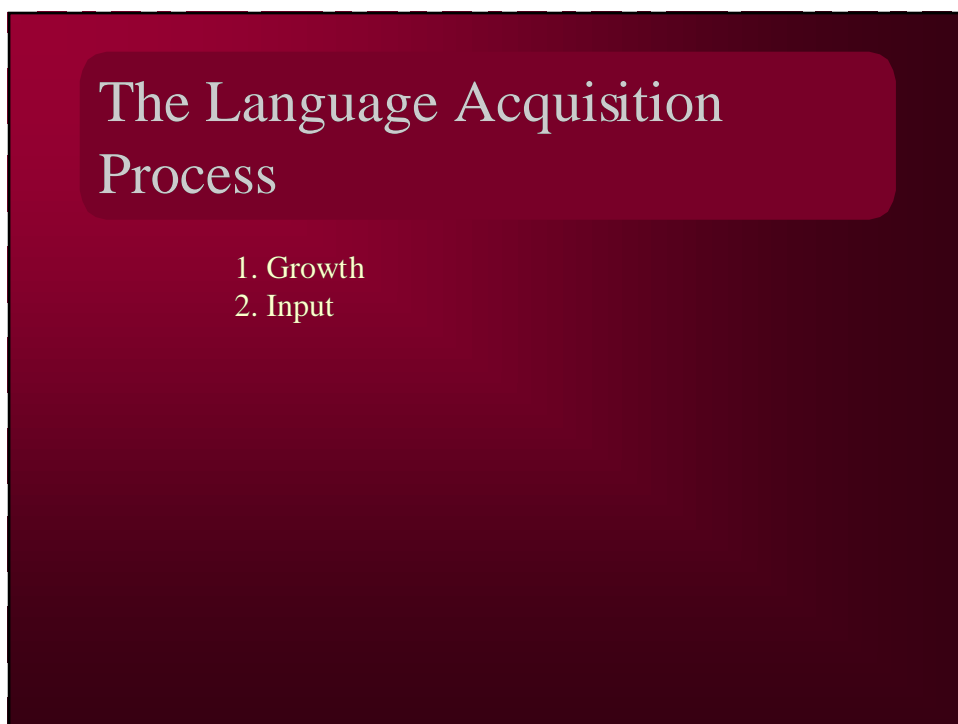
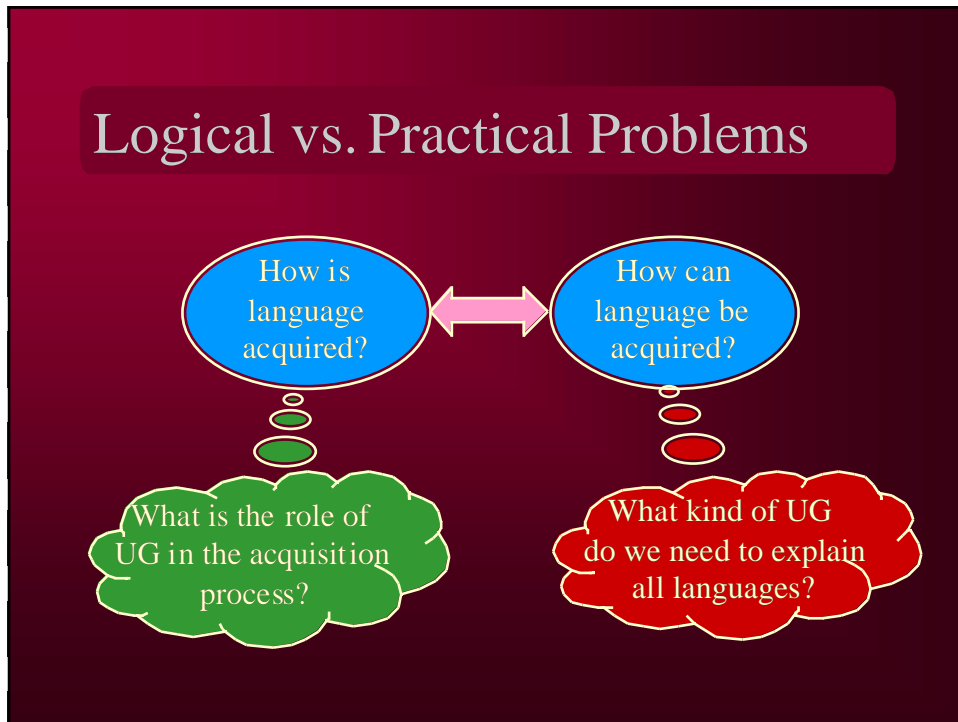
- For a particular set of data there are indefinitely many different grammars.
- At any point our set of data is finite.
- We need a criterion to find the *real* grammar.

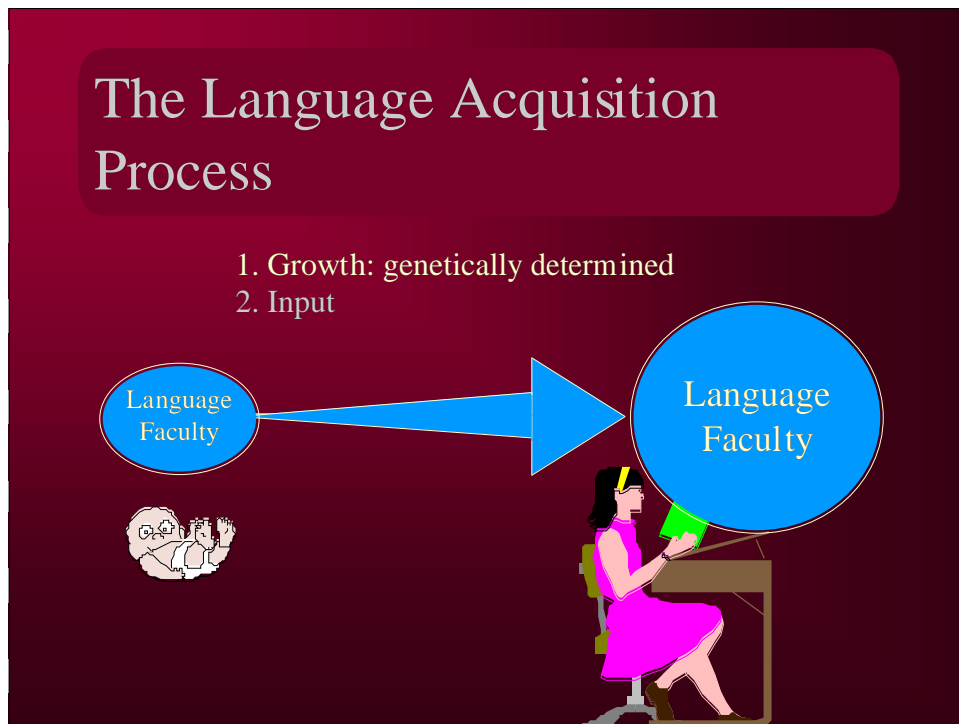
Language acquisition

- Every human language can be acquired by any human being.
- The grammar acquired is not a direct reflection of the input data.
 - similarity of grammar despite different experience
 - knowledge about sentences and constructions not in the experience









The Language Acquisition Process

1. Growth: genetically determined
2. Input

They knew that a washing machine needs electricity.
Sie wussten, dass eine Waschmaschine Elektrizität braucht.

The Language Acquisition Process

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*They knew that a washing machine **needs** electricity.*

*Sie wussten, dass eine Waschmaschine **Elektrizität braucht**.*

The Language Acquisition Process

1. Growth: genetically determined
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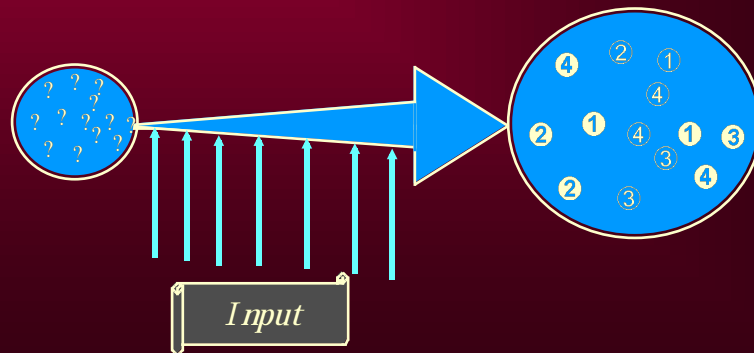
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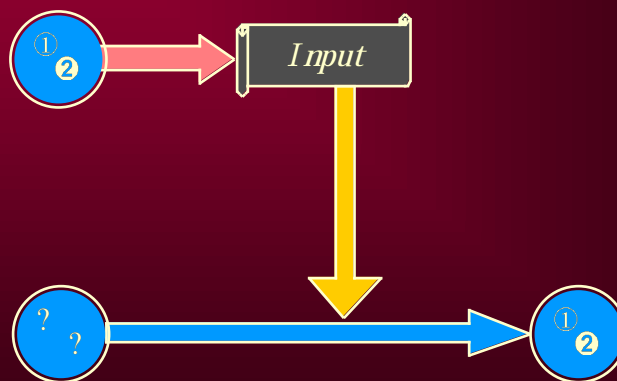


The Language Acquisition Process

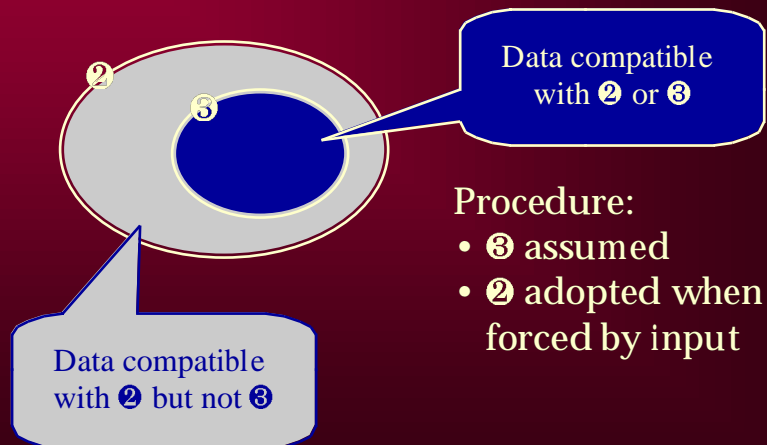
1. Growth: genetically determined
2. Input \Rightarrow Parameter setting



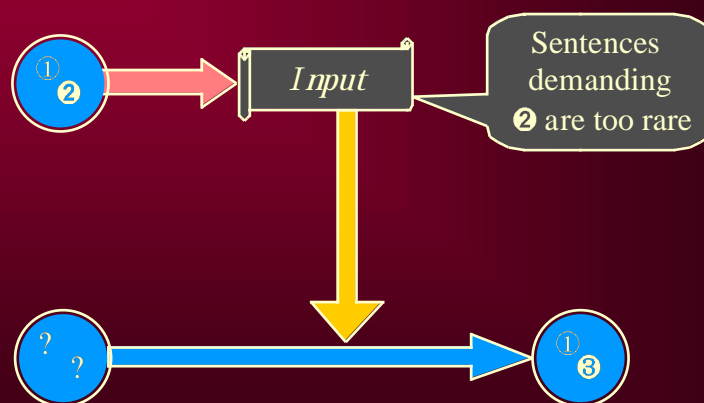
Parameter Setting



Subset Principle



Parameter Setting

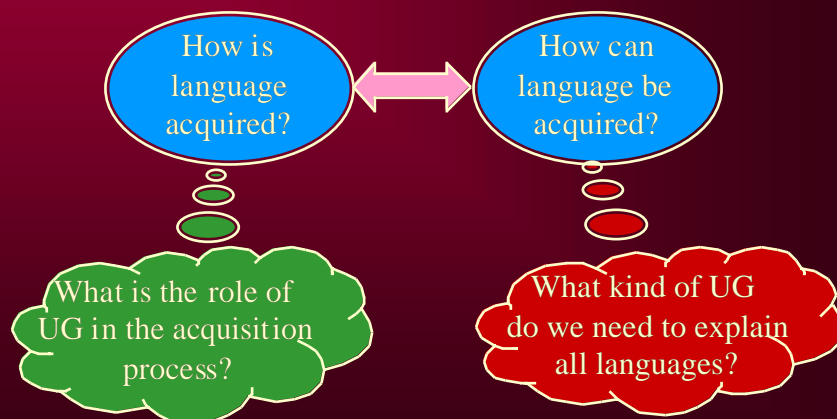


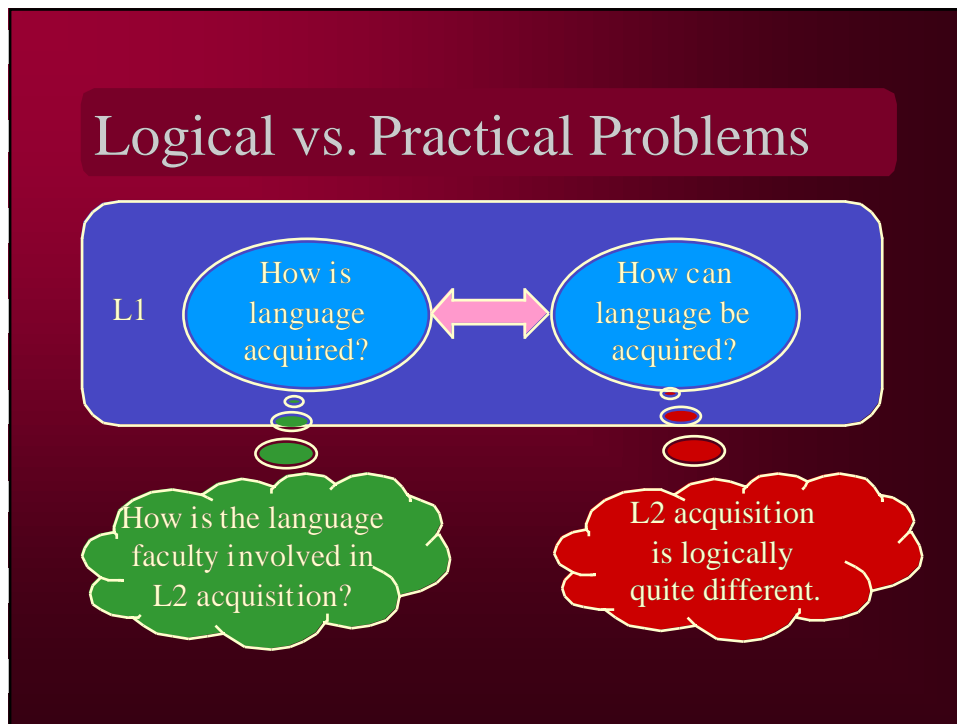
Aims of Chomskyan Linguistics

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



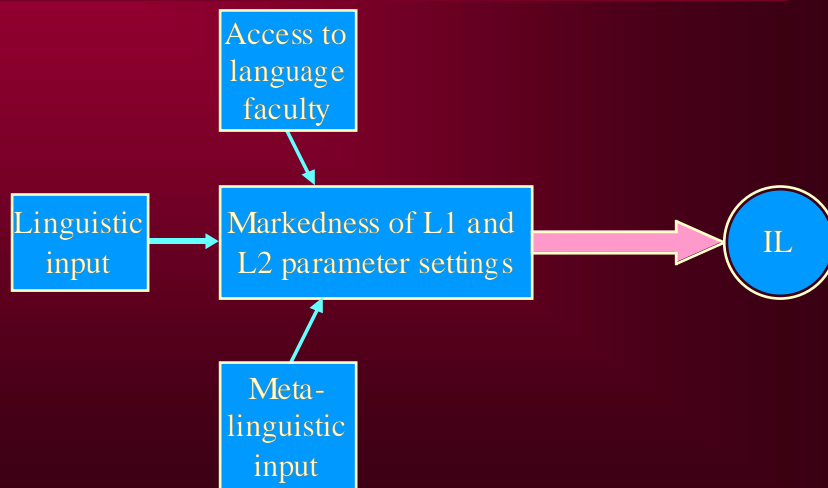
Logical vs. Practical Problems





- ## Factors involved in L1 and L2 acquisition
- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>L1 acquisition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language faculty ● Markedness ● Linguistic input | <p>L2 acquisition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language faculty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how? - to what extent? ● Markedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relative to L1 ● Linguistic input <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - including meta-linguistic input |
|--|--|

Markedness and L2 Acquisition



Schedule

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------|------------------|
| ● 25.10. Introduction | ● 13.12. | L2 acquisition |
| ● 1.11. Chomsky's theory | ● 20.12. | |
| ● 8.11. | ● 10.1. | Conclusion |
| ● 15.11. L1 acquisition | ● 17.1. | |
| ● 22.11. | ● 24.1. | <i>no course</i> |
| ● 29.11. <i>Dies Acad.</i> | ● 31.1. | <i>no course</i> |
| ● 6.12. <i>no course</i> | ● 7.2. | <i>exams</i> |
| | ● 14.2. | |

Literature: general

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 25.10. Introduction ● 1.11. Chomsky's theory ● 8.11. ● 15.11. ● 22.11. ● 29.11. <i>Dies Acad.</i> ● 6.12. <i>no course</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 13.12. ● 20.12. ● 10.1. ● 17.1. ● 24.1. ● 31.1. ● 7.2. ● 14.2.
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1

2

3

L1 acquisition

L2 acquisition

Conclusion

no course

no course

exams

Introductory literature 1

- Chomskyan linguistics
 - Hornstein, Norbert & Lightfoot, David (1981), 'Introduction', in Hornstein & Lightfoot (eds.), *Explanation in Linguistics: The logical problem of language acquisition*, London & New York: Longman, p. 9-31.
 - ten Hacken, Pius (2002), 'Chomskyan Linguistics and the Sciences of Communication', *Studies in Communication Sciences* 2/ 2:109-134.

Introductory literature 2

- First language acquisition:
 - Crain, Stephen & Lillo-Martin, Diane (1999), *An Introduction to Linguistic Theory and Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Blackwell, Part 1 (p. 3-70).
 - Chomsky, Noam (1999), 'On the Nature, Use, and Acquisition of Language', in Ritchie & Bhatia (eds.), *Handbook of Child Language Acquisition*, San Diego: Academic Press, p. 33-54.

Topics (examples)

	Type of involvement of UG	Acquisition of grammar
L1	maturation continuity bio-program	morphology auxiliaries X-bar theory word order prodrop
L2	full access to UG no access to UG access through L1	...

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