ASSESSMENT TASK 4 – EXTENDED RESPONSE DRAFT

The nature versus nurture is an age long debate amongst psychologists; however, it is important to recognise that both are important for communication and language development. Nature refers to the biological influences on a person, such as their genetics (heredity and variation of inherited characteristics). Alternatively, nurture encompasses the environmental influences of a person, such as the culture or country they live in. Both are seen to impact on language development, which is the process where children begin to understand and communicate language throughout early childhood, and communication, which can be defined as the transfer of a message from one person to another. Consequently, effective communication is when the listener receives, interprets and understands the message as it was intended by the speaker. In this situation, Mohammad has a speech impediment (any physical defect that impedes normal or easy speech), and his adopted sister, Shia, has underdeveloped language and communication skills from living in foster care most of her life, thus both biological and environmental influences have impacted these siblings. Mention the theories you will discuss in the essay briefly.

The Innatist view on language development emphasises the biological and genetic influence on language acquisition and communication, thus believing in the nature aspect of the debate. Innatist Chomsky (1968) argued that “children will never acquire the tools needed for processing an infinite number of sentences if the language acquisition mechanism was dependent on language input alone”. He then theorised that humans were born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which is hardwired device for language; a mechanism for working out the rules of language. He believed that languages share universal rules, thus the LAD works cross-culturally, and that it enabled the generation of sentences with grammatical structure. He also believed that there was a critical period in which the LAD operates, from 0 to 8 or 9 years of age. Hence, as both children can learn and speak language, even with Mohammad’s ‘speech impediment’ and Shias’ lack of parental assistance in developing language with her being ‘brought up in a foster home’. Evidence that supports Chomsky’s theory are the human anatomy and Pinker (1994); we are adapted to produce speech through our evolved vocal tract (for precise articulation of a wide range of vocal sounds), Broca’s area (speech production/articulation) and Wernicke’s area (speech comprehension). Additionally, Pinker (1994) found that chimpanzees/apes have none/little grammatical competence. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of Chomsky’s research; He paid a limited amount of attention to the social environment in which the child was developing (apart from acknowledging that the primary linguistic input came from language used in the family and community) Chomsky's work on language was theoretical, hence he did not study real children, and the theory relies on children being exposed to language but takes no account of the interaction between children and their parents. Nor does it recognise the reasons why a child might want to speak, the functions of language. Thus, it can be inferred that there is a biological basis for language development, and it is as important as their environment. Good evaluation

The Interactionist standpoint believes that both biological and social factors interact for language acquisition, thus accounting for the nurture aspect of the debate. Well known Interactionist Bruner believed that, in addition to having a LAD, humans also need a Language Acquisition Support System to successfully develop language. Parents provide suitable interactional frameworks for all types of language (scaffolding), the routines (formats) they create offer opportunities for parents to raise expectations and develop children’s language abilities, the use of nonverbal methods (joint attention) of directing attention and conversational turn taking (reference) develop language in the child. However, it has been concluded in psychological research that children in all cultures, regardless of the levels of interaction or child directed speech they experience, pass through the same stages/milestones of language development, suggesting that the LASS is useful but not essential for language acquisition. Attachment theorist Bowlby (1969) proposed the maternal deprivation hypothesis, which is the separation/loss of the mother as well as a failure to develop an attachment make it explicitly clear as to why you are mentioning Bowlby (refer to Q or statement or scenario) . Another crucial theorist is sociolinguist Bernstein (1971), who investigated the type of language codes, and found that lower classes use restricted code, whereas the middle and upper class can use both restricted and elaborative code, hence socioeconomic situation, a facet of the environment and thus support for the role of the environment In communication (make explicitly clear why you mention this) impacts on communication; yet, Labov (1970) viewed Bernstein and his research as ethnocentric/classist. Another important researcher is Tannen (1990), who’s research into gender differences in communication. She found that women use rapport talk, which is used to build and negotiate relationships, and enjoy private conversations. Alternatively, she found that men use report talk, which is used to build status amongst peers, and prefer public speaking and being centre stage. As Shia was raised in the foster care system, it could be theorised that she suffers from maternal deprivation as it is likely she did not receive the attention/affection necessary to form an attachment, hence she did not have any motivation to develop her speech or a Language Acquisition Support System to help develop her language, thus ‘her speech and communication are at the expected level of a much younger child’~~. Due to this, it is likely that she speaks predominately in restricted~~ there is no evidence that she speak sin restricted code or that she restricted code would be a result of growing up in foster care code, as it is commonly used amongst friends, and Shia ‘is quite comfortable when speaking…between herself and friends.’ It is also evident that Mohammad and Shia have been socialised to communicate by their gender identity, as men enjoy speaking in centre stage/in front of others. Mohammad is a male, thus he uses report talk, as seen in his ‘confident and assertive’ speech, and Shia is a female, hence she uses rapport talk, which is demonstrated in her ‘not assertive’ speech that works to not ruin any potential for relationship growth in her life. Consequently, Mohammad ‘has recently joined a debate team’ and ‘enjoys speaking to larger audiences’, whereas women prefer private conversations, hence Shia ‘does not enjoy public speaking’ and ‘is quite comfortable when speaking to build rapport between herself and friends.’ This emphasises the importance of nurture in order to develop effective communication skills, and how it is equally as influential as our biology is. L

Thus from reviewing both sides of the evidence ‘The development of language abilities and effective communication in a person are due just as much to the environment in which the person develops as their genetics’ is an accurate statement, as exemplified by Mohammad’s genetic influence of his speech impediment, as well as Shia’s environmental influence of her upbringing in the foster care system. Bard and Sachs (1977) case study is a prime example of how both the environment and biology influence our speech development; “Jim” is the hearing son of two deaf parents. His parents wanted him to learn and develop his speech, therefore they made him watch television and listen to the radio regularly. However, he showed little speech development, and progress was only made when he saw a speech therapist. It can be concluded that simple exposure to the input/language is not enough, and that children need motivation and a support system along with the innate ability to learn and develop language to be successful in their language acquisition and communication development.