

Psychology of Language

6 Critical period and language creation

Fall 2023

Tues/Thur 5:00-6:15pm

Emma Wing

Drop-in hours:

Email me your availability!

Road map

- Wrapping up 5 Learning syntax & morphology
- Unit 1: Development of Language
 - 6 Critical period and language creation

Unit 1:

Development of Language

6 Critical period & language creation

Critical period and language creation

- Learning objectives

- Define *critical period*
- Define *pidgin* and *creole*
- Describe the stages that generations of deaf school children in Nicaragua went through in the birth of a new language
- Form an inkling of an opinion with respect to the nativism/empiricism debate!
 - Nativism: there is an innate, biological aspect to language learning and the structure of language (note: nativists still think that individual language vocabulary and rules must be learned!)
 - Empiricism: general learning mechanisms allow a child to learn all of language. There is no innate learning device.

Critical period and language creation

- Movie: Nicaraguan Sign Language

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- Movie: Nicaraguan Sign Language

- Discussion questions

1. What is **homesign**?
2. What is a **pidgin**?
3. What is a **creole**?
4. What stages did the school children in Nicaragua go through in the birth of Nicaraguan Sign Language?
5. What is a big difference between the first signers in the school in Nicaragua and the later signers?
6. What is one piece of evidence that Nicaraguan Sign Language is different from gestures that hearing speakers in Nicaragua use?
7. Comment on the nativism/empiricism debate given the movie we just watched. What do you think? Is there evidence of nativism?

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- For the exam:
 - One of the short answer questions will ask you your opinion about nativism and empiricism. You don't need to have a strong opinion. You just need to say what you think now, and discuss some of the pieces of evidence for and/or against nativism/empiricism that we have talked about in class or that you learned elsewhere.