

## Language Acquisition Theory

Welcome to Language Acquisition Theory.

In this portion of Module 2, you will become familiar with the most influential linguists in second language acquisition and their theories.

Before we begin, it's important that you understand two key terms.

Linguistics is the study of the nature, structure, and variation of language.

Language acquisition is the process of becoming proficient in a language so naturally that we are not conscious of the rules.

Five of the most influential linguists working today in the field of second language acquisition are Noam Chomsky, Stephen Krashen, Jim Cummins, Michael Long, and Catherine Doughty.

**Chomsky** theorizes that language learning is innate – that human babies are born with a predisposition to learn language.

**Krashen** emphasizes the interpersonal aspects of language. According to Krashen, meaningful interaction is the key to language learning.

**Cummins** distinguishes between social language and academic language, saying second language learners need Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency in order to succeed in school.

**Long and Doughty** focus their attention to learning language through interaction as well as providing methods for making language acquisition more likely during interaction.

As you continue exploring language acquisition, you will learn more about these linguists and their contributions to language acquisition theory and the impact their research has had in the field of language teaching.