Constructing Language

From Infancy to Adulthood

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Overview

- How children learn language.
- Differences between bilingual and monolingual children.
- How a good grasp of language can enhance encoding of environment.

Approaches to Learning Language

- Not all children go about learning language the same way *(Bloom, 2000)*
  - Referential style
  - Expressive style

Referential style

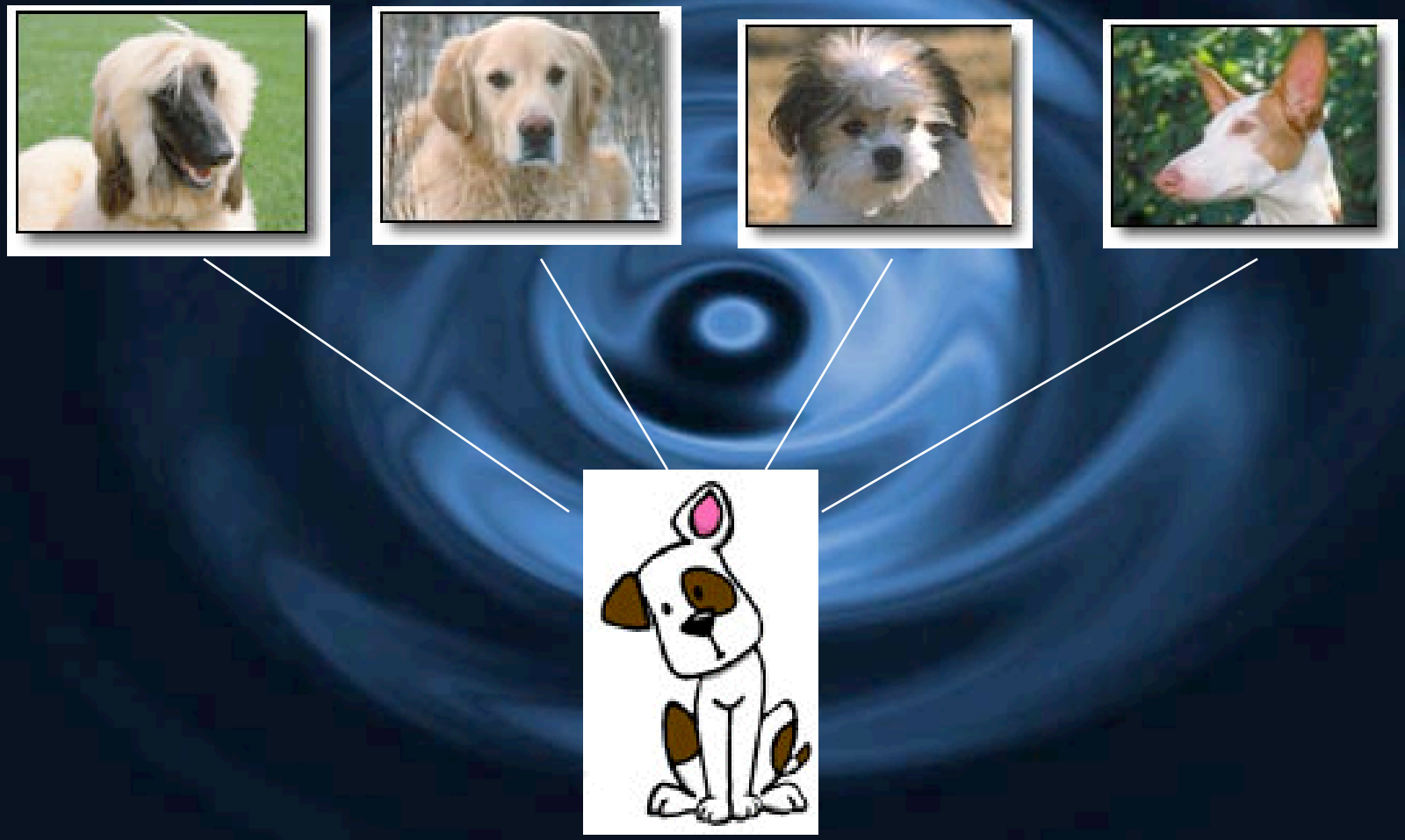
- First learn nouns, or objects
  - Accomplished by active teaching
  - Child must be told a ball is a ball
- Then structure sentences

Expressive style

- Memorize short structures
  - Such as “I want it.”
  - Can be accomplished through casual observance or mimicking.

From “I want cookie.” to “Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.” Noam Chomsky

- “Fast mapping”
  - Children only need to hear a word once or twice in order to retain it.
- “Theory of Mind”
  - Connect the new word to what it represents
  - Creates a prototype *(Bloom, 2000)*



Cognitive Development in Bilingual children *(Lee, 1996)*

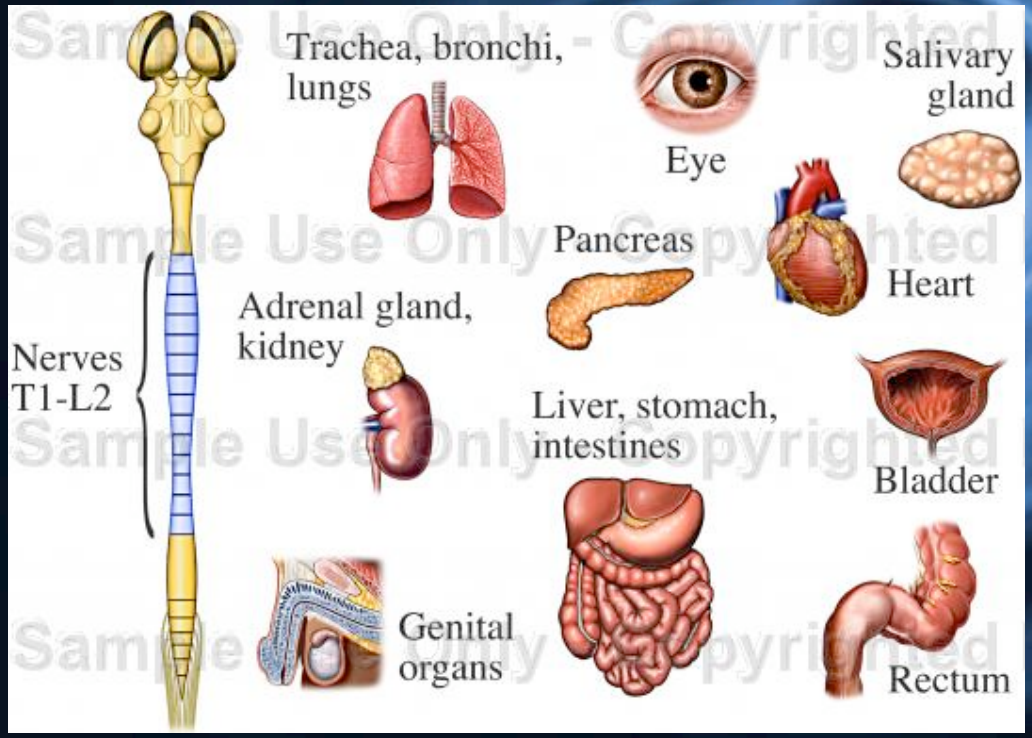
- Previously claimed that bilinguals had lower verbal intelligence due to 'balance effect.'
- Once proficient in both languages children show advantages
  - Ability to understand abstractness and symbolism
  - Superior mental flexibility and formation of concepts
  - Focus is on the form rather than the meaning.

Language can enhance or inhibit Cognition and Understanding of surroundings

- Adults with higher education, more vocabulary retain more when watching news.
  - Greater sympathetic nervous system activation.
  - SNS associated with encoding and storage

    (Grabe, Lang, Zhou, Bolls, 2000)
- Seems to have a feedback loop.

Sympathetic Nervous System



Note about visual

- As Lee found, SNS activity is heightened when more information is being stored.
- More information is encoded through the visual system when watching the news. *(Fox, 2004)*

Summary

- Although children learn language differently, data shows consistent high ability to master language in humans.
- The more language understanding one has leads to greater understanding of abstract concepts, and a higher rate of encoding environment.
- It has a feedback loop. Language is learned through external environment, then the environment effects the amount we are able to encode.