

The Bilingualistic Enterprise:

New Perspectives on the Evolution and Nature of the Human Language Faculty

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Summary

This book of new work by leading scholars represents some of the main work in progress in biolinguistics and especially those parts of it that bear on the evolution of the language faculty. The linked ideas that in every human there is a language acquisition device and that universal grammar underlies all human languages. How the language acquisition device might have evolved was largely sidestepped in generative linguistics during its first decades. Advances in the study of the brain and developmental biology have made it possible to begin to explain how the language organ works, and opened the way for new considerations of how the language faculty might have evolved and developed. Here the authors focus on language evolution and variation, aiming to contribute to the understanding of the processes involved in both. They explore the factors which contribute to the growth of language in the individual, including genetic endowment, experience, and language-independent principles of efficient computation. The book shows that the bilingualistic enterprise offers fresh perspectives on developments in theoretical linguistics as well as on language variation and evolution. It brings to the fore links between the biological basis of language, language evolution, and language change.

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