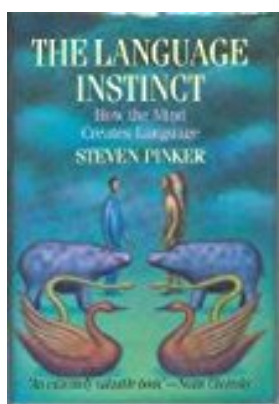


[PDF] The Language Instinct: How The Mind Creates The Gift Of Language

Steven Pinker - pdf download free book



Books Details:

Title: The Language Instinct: How th

Author: Steven Pinker

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly A three-year-old toddler is "a grammatical genius"--master of most constructions, obeying adult rules of language. To Pinker, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology psycholinguist, the explanation for this miracle is that language is an instinct, an evolutionary adaptation that is partly "hard-wired" into the brain and partly learned. In this exciting synthesis--an entertaining, totally accessible study that will regale language lovers and challenge professionals in

many disciplines--Pinker builds a bridge between "innatists" like MIT linguist Noam Chomsky, who hold that infants are biologically programmed for language, and "social interactionists" who contend that they acquire it largely from the environment. If Pinker is right, the origins of language go much further back than 30,000 years ago (the date most commonly given in textbooks)--perhaps to *Homo habilis*, who lived 2.5 million years ago, or even eons earlier. Peppered with mind-stretching language exercises, the narrative first unravels how babies learn to talk and how people make sense of speech. Professor and co-director of MIT's Center for Cognitive Science, Pinker demolishes linguistic determinism, which holds that differences among languages cause marked differences in the thoughts of their speakers. He then follows neurolinguists in their quest for language centers in the brain and for genes that might help build brain circuits controlling grammar and speech. Pinker also argues that claims for chimpanzees' acquisition of language (via symbols or American Sign Language) are vastly exaggerated and rest on skimpy data. Finally, he takes delightful swipes at "language mavens" like William Safire and Richard Lederer, accusing them of rigidity and of grossly underestimating the average person's language skills. Pinker's book is a beautiful hymn to the infinite creative potential of language. Newbridge Book Clubs main selection; BOMC and QPB alternates.

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From Library Journal Following fast on the heels of Joel Davis's *Mother Tongue* (LJ 12/93) is another provocative and skillfully written book by an MIT professor who specializes in the language development of children. While Pinker covers some of the same ground as did Davis, he argues that an "innate grammatical machinery of the brain" exists, which allows children to "reinvent" language on their own. Basing his ideas on Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar theory, Pinker describes language as a "discrete combinatorial system" that might easily have evolved via natural selection. Pinker steps on a few toes (language mavens beware!), but his work, while controversial, is well argued, challenging, often humorous, and always fascinating. Most public and academic libraries will want to add this title to their collections.

- *Laurie Bartolini, Lincoln Lib., Springfield, Ill.*

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