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# Language Acquisition, Rule-following, and the Individual Species Concept

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## Abstract

This paper builds upon a family of positions independently developed by Yale linguist Steven Anderson, Tel Aviv evolutionary theorist Eva Jablonka, and myself, concerning the possible mode of evolution of a "Language Acquisition Device" as posited by the followers of Noam Chomsky.

These positions hold, roughly, that such a faculty is likely to have evolved *in response* to innovations by the community of speakers, allowing their use to be more easily learned. Consequently, to the Chomskyan distinction between "competence" and "performance" (more recently, "I-language" and "E-language"), we must add something like Saussure's *langue*; language as a *public object*, manifest not in the minds or utterances of individual speakers, but in the community practices to which those speakers respond.

This paper develops and links two theoretic consequences of the position. In his seminal lectures on Wittgenstein's rule-following argument, Saul Kripke suggested that Chomskyan generative linguistics fell foul of the "sceptical paradox" he presented there. The Anderson/Jablonka/Glackin approach, I argue, allows a reconciliation of the two theorists' approaches to language by emphasising the role public linguistic practices, of the sort Kripke appeals to in his solution to the paradox, play in an evolutionarily plausible theory of generative grammar.

David Hull and Michael Ghiselin have controversially proposed that we view species as individuals rather than as classes or kinds. Following this, I argue, we can use the Kripkean sceptical paradox to understand the difference between language acquisition by an individual organism, and the way a species "learns" it in evolving the LAD.

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