

Abstract

Poverty of Stimulus Arguments contend that children could not acquire language solely on the basis of the linguistic input they receive, because this "stimulus" is claimed to be inadequate in some respect. It has been claimed that children's available stimulus may lack *positive evidence* that a certain constructions are licensed by the language; the linguistic input is devoid of *negative evidence*, which provides information about what strings are *not* part of the language; there is *no overt evidence* in the linguistic input for what speakers know about a language. To overcome the "poverty" of available stimulus, linguistic nativists posit that children are born with innate, domain specific knowledge, which aids the acquisition process.

Much of the Poverty of Stimulus debate has focused on the purported lack of positive evidence and the consequences of missing negative evidence. This thesis looks to clarify some of the issues in the debate and focus on how views about the nature of language affect Poverty of Stimulus Arguments. Poverty of Stimulus Arguments are tied to views about the end-state of the acquisition process, because while some descriptions of language make the poverty of stimulus question look compelling, others undermine it. By changing the end-state of the acquisition process it may be possible to assuage Poverty of Stimulus Arguments.