

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
University of Mostaganem**

**Faculty of Foreign Languages  
Department of English**



**MASTER  
« English Language and Linguistics »**

***Cognitive Linguistics: Tomasello's Usage Based Theory of  
Language Acquisition***

**Presented by:**

**LAREDJ DENIA**

**Board of examiners:**

**Supervisor: Dr. Hamerlain**

**Chairwoman: Mrs.**

**Examiner: Mrs.**

**Academic Year 2016/2017**

# Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my father and to my dearest mother who have never stopped loving me and continuously helping me to keep my spirit up. My heartfelt thanks are addressed to my brothers & my sisters for their never-ending patience and precious advice many thanks for their moral support.

A special thank is addressed to all my intimates and friends Mohamed, Asma, Zahia, Nouria, Adaouia and all my class mates.

I'd like to seize this opportunity to send a thought to all my nephews, nieces: Amine, Chiraz and Raghad.

# Acknowledgement

I must thank God who had gave me the effort to exceed all the  
obstacles to prepare this modest project

I would like to acknowledge the great supervisor DrHamerlain, I am  
very grateful to her for all the help

To all our teachers and colleagues

To everyone who helped me to prepare this work

## Abstract

In this dissertation, we will spot light on a new theory within Cognitive linguistics which is the Usage Based Theory of Language Acquisition introduced by the Emergent Michael Tomasello. This study aims at introducing this theory as a new attempt to language acquisition, to see what the new paradigms are brought by this theory and to see to what extent it is valid for other languages. The Usage Based theory introduced the usage-events, the socio-cultural dimension of language and human's cognitive skills. Thus, depending on a descriptive method, we compare two already done studies by applying the usage based model, more exactly Tomasello's Verb-island Hypothesis on young children of different languages (the English child Travis and Mandarin Chinese speaking children CY and ZHZ). The current comparative study shows that the verb Island Hypothesis is applicable for the English child whereas it is not the case for the Mandarin speaking children. This is an evidence that the Usage Based Theory is not valid for all languages at least not for the Mandarin Chinese.

Key Words: Cognitive Linguistics, Usage Based Theory, Michael Tomasello, Verb-island Hypothesis.

## **List of Abbreviations**

CL: cognitive Linguistics

UBT: Usage Based Theory

VIH: Verb Island Hypothesis

## List of Tables

### **First Study by Tomasello**

Table 1: Change of State Verbs, the Six Categories starting.....	
From 16 to 24 months.....	39
Table 2: Activity Verbs from 16 to 24 months.....	41
Table 3: The Expansion of Noun Phrase for T's early Language.....	42
Table 4: T's sentences with more than One Verb (complex sentences).....	43

### **Second Study by Yang and Xiao**

Table 1: The Major Argument Type in CY and ZHZ early language.....	45
Table 2: The Number of Verbs Co-occurring with Various functional Categories.....	46
Table 3: The Number of Verbs in Serial Verb Constructions.....	47
Table 4: The Number of verbs in Compound Sentences.....	48

## Table of Content

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgments.....	II
Abstract.....	III
List of Abbreviations.....	IV
List of Tables.....	VI
Table of Content.....	VII
General Introduction.....	1
 <b>Chapter One</b>	
1. Definition of CL.....	5
2. The Historical Background of CL.....	7
3. The Theoretical Principales of CL.....	8
3.1. The Two Key Commitments of CL.....	8
3.1.1. The Generalization Commitment.....	8
3.1.2. The Cognitive Commitment.....	9
3.2. The Non-modularism Vs the Non-objectivism.....	10
3.2.1. The Non-modularism.....	10
3.2.2. The “Non-objectivism” or “Blue-print”.....	11
3.3. Anew Division of CL.....	11
3.3.1. Language as an Integral Part of Cognition.....	11
3.3.2. Language is Symbolic in Nature.....	11
4. The Main of Research in CL.....	12
4.1. The Cognitive Semantics.....	12
4.2. The Cognitive Approaches to Grammar.....	13
4.2.1. The Symbolic Thesis.....	13
4.2.2. The Usage Based Thesis.....	13
5. The Main Methods in CL.....	14

5.1. Talmy's Grammatical Vs Lexical Sub-system Approach.....	14
5.2. Cognitive Grammar.....	15
5.3. Constructional Approaches to Grammar.....	15
5.4. Cognitive Approches to Grammaticalization.....	16
6. Future of CL.....	16
7. Conclusion.....	18

## **Chapter two**

1. Definition of UBT.....	20
2. About Michael Tomasello.....	23
3. The Origins of Language from a Usage Based View.....	25
3.1. The Phylogenitic Origins.....	26
3.2. The Ontogenitic Origin.....	27
4. Tomasello's Account for Skills Necessary for Language .....	27
4.1. Intention Reading.....	27
4.2. Relevance Assumption.....	27
4.3. The Role Reversal Imitation.....	28
4.4. Pattern Finding and Grammaticalization.....	28
5. Grammar Development in the UBT.....	29
5.1. Grammar Development.....	29
5.2. Pre-linguistic Communication.....	30
6. Factors Effecting Usage Based Grammar.....	30
6.1. Frequency.....	31
6.2. Consistency.....	32
6.3. Complexity.....	33
7. The Main Concepts in UBT.....	33
7.1. Communication Intention .....	33
7.2. An Utterance .....	33

7.3. A Schema.....	33
7.4. A Construction.....	34
7.5. Cognitive Representation.....	34
7.6. Entrenchment.....	34

### **Chapter Three**

1. Verb-island Hypothesis.....	35
2. The First Study by Michael Tomasello on the English Child “T”.....	38
2.1. Description of the Case Study.....	38
2.2. The Verb-island Hypothesis: Early Verbs Construction in English Language.....	38
2.3. General Results of the Study.....	44
3. The Second Study by Yang and Xiao on the Two Mandarin Chinese Children.....	44
3.1. Description of the Case study.....	44
3.2. The Verb-island Hypothesis: Early Verbs Acquisition in Mandarin Chinese.....	45
3.3. General Results of the Study.....	49
4. Comparison between Tomasello’s and Yang and Xiao’s Studies.....	50
4.1. The Major Similarities and Divergences.....	50
4.2. The Validity of the UBT.....	53
4.3. Recommendations for an Alternative Model.....	53
General Conclusion.....	56
References.....	58

## General Introduction

Before we start talking about our empirical research we would rather talk about what motivated us to choose Cognitive Linguistics as a field of research in this dissertation. It is really interesting to investigate something that is common to all human beings; it is as if you are searching for the origins of something personal like someone's race for example. Before being specialized in the field English linguistics, we didn't have such curiosity to know how do we elaborate and develop our language and where does it come from? And many other questions. However, during the last two years we have talked about language acquisition and more precisely about Noam Chomsky and his innateness of language and UG. It is only at that time that we started to be interested in such questions and we wondered a lot whether Chomsky's view is true or not. Another reason that pushes us to land in Cognitive Linguistics is that it is as we think taking the linguistic research a step further to fulfill the dream of linguistics to reach scientific level. It has taken a turn by using authentic corpora of spontaneous production of spoken and written speech and statistical modeling. For these reasons, we want to investigate this field of inquiry in the current research thesis not to have exact answers to these questions but at least have more knowledge about the other views and to know how other linguists see language in order to form knowledge about language acquisition in general.

While reading about Cognitive linguistics we noticed that many attempts in this field were done to find out the answer to the question of language acquisition and to discover the truth behind this mystery. Consequently, there were agreements and oppositions among these linguists and researchers, each one sees language from his perspective and according to his domain of inquiry which generates a kind of divisions among them. What interested us more are agreements and disagreements to Chomsky's view and among which there was the Usage

Usage Based Theory of Language Acquisition introduced by the Emergent Michael Tomasello who has introduced the notion of Usage-event and cultural experiences together with cognitive processes into language acquisition. Through this paper, we want first to introduce the Usage Based Theory which is recent theory that came as a reaction to Chomsky's view of language and to highlight what Tomasello brings as evidences to his view of language acquisition and the second thing is to see to what extent are his evidences valid to all human languages which will all be included in the under topic; "*Cognitive Linguistics: Tomasello's Usage Based Theory of Language Acquisition*". In order to do so we raised the following research question: *How does an infant acquire language from a usage based perspective? Or what are the new paradigms brought by Tomasello's Usage Based Theory of Language Acquisition into Cognitive Linguistics?* Since the current study is actually a descriptive one this leads us to use descriptive analyses all along the whole work. The comparative method is also desired since there will be comparison at the end of the study.

The long term goal of this study is to provide useful information that will benefit students and those who are interested in this area of research. The aim of the study is to build a framework (if we may call it so) which contains the current and the recent views to language acquisition to what extent is it available compared to the other existing theories. Moreover, this study will spot light on linguists who though they have add new things in the field of cognitive linguistics no matter how available they are, they still unknown for us as linguistic students because what we really need is not only to know about the first well known linguists but also those new linguist whom we cannot know easily and who have new view of language.

In order to organize our theses, we have divided the work into three chapters; the first chapter is about cognitive linguistics, it is an introduction to cognitive linguistics in general for readers who have no knowledge or few one about cognitive linguistics to prepare the

ground for what is coming in the next chapter. We will first define cognitive linguistics and introduce its historical background, its theoretical principles, and the main areas of research in cognitive linguistics, its main methods and finally the future expectations of cognitive linguistics. The second chapter will be about The Usage Based Theory which is part of cognitive linguistics and the heart of the whole work, first we will define Usage Base Theory and see the origins of language from a usage based perspective, see who is Michael Tomasello, his account for skills necessary for language, the development of grammar in the Usage Based Theory, finally the main concepts in this theory. The third chapter will be a kind of comparison between two studies using the usage based model of the Verb-island Hypothesis, we will first define what is the Verb-island Hypothesis, introduce the first study on an English child T by Michael Tomasello, the second study of on two mandarin speaking children by Yang and Xiao both studies using the Verb-island Hypothesis, comparison between the two studies, the validity of the usage based theory and finally recommendations for an alternative model.

# **Chapter One:**

## **Cognitive Linguistics (CL)**

## **Introduction**

Cognitive linguistics (CL) is an interdisciplinary field of general linguistics that has recently become the focus of many linguists. It studies the relation between language and human mind; it was originated in the early 1970s and the late 1980s, particularly in the works of Charles Fillmore (1975), George Lakoff (1987), and Ronald Langecker (1987). Each of these linguists has his own concern on a particular linguistic phenomenon but one important assumption shared between them is meaning which is central to language and which has to be the primary focus of any linguistic study.

In order to give an overview of CL, this chapter will be answering the following questions: What is CL? What is its historical background? What are its theoretical and methodological principles? And what are the main areas of research and main theories of CL? At the end we will be giving some expected development for CL. So this chapter will examine a number of crucial cognitive linguistic concepts and principals that will prepare the ground for further understanding of what is coming later.

### **1. Definition of CL:**

CL has been defined by many scholars and linguists in different ways, each one according to his field of research and his area of inquiry. Evans and Green describe it as follows: “A ‘movement ‘or an ‘enterprise’ because it is not a specific theory. Instead, it is an approach that has adopted a common set of guiding principles, assumptions and perspectives which led to a diverse range of complementary, overlapping theories”. (2006, p.3)

It is a movement since CL was a result of the dissatisfaction with what existed before. It is mainly a reaction against the formalist approaches which gave more importance to the form rather than the semantic of language.

It is also seen as an enterprise that has two key commitments which were brought by Lakoff(1990). The Generative commitment which is “a commitment to the characterization of

general principles that are responsible for all aspect of human language and the Cognitive Commitment which is a commitment to developing a characterization of general principles for language that accords with what is known about the mind and brain from other disciplines”(Lakoffas cited inEven and Green, 2006,pp. 27-28).

In 2008 Noriko Matsumoto brought another definition of CL in which he has gathered all its aspects well sited and in short words, by saying:

‘CL acknowledges that language is part of, dependent on, and influenced by human cognition, including human perception and categorization, and that language develops and changes through human interaction and experiences in the world.’ ( Matsumoto, 2008, p.127).

In other words, CL sees language as part of human cognition and that it is shaped through his social interactions and experiences. So, language is both a cognitive or a mental ability and a result of the social interaction with the world around us.

Another definition by Oxford Handbook Online is as follows: ‘CL is an approach to the analysis of natural language...that focuses on language as an instrument for organizing, processing, and conveying information ...’( Oxford handbook online, 2016, p. 1). Natural Language according to this view is the material of study that reflects mental activities which occur unconsciously.

Generally speaking, from the previous definition CL is the study of the natural language with reference to the cognitive processes of the human being together with the social interactions and experiences he goes through in his life.

## 2. The Historical background of CL:

When we go back to the history of CL we notice that it dates back to the time when direct oppositions to ideas mainly within Chomskyian linguistics were made. In these, structure was seen independent of meaning and syntax as the central object of interest in linguistic studies.

“It originally emerged in the 1970’s with scholars like Fillmore(1975), Lakoff and Thompson(1975), Rosch(1975)”(Evans et al., 2007, p.1). CL has always been strongly influenced by theories and findings from other cognitive sciences that emerged during the 1960’s and the 1970’s. During the same period(1970’s) Chomsky has brought revolutionary claims into linguistics, the innateness of the linguistic capacity which led to great debates in the field of language acquisition that still until the present day. His ideas of the innate set of rules that human has “were rejected by functionally and cognitively oriented researchers and in general by those studying acquisition empirically”. (Newman, 2007, p.2)

1987 is an important date in the history of CL because some influential frameworks were published and which are considered as the departing point in this field. ‘Lakoff’s *Woman, Fire and Dangerous things*, Langacker’s *Foundation of Cognitive Grammar*, and Mark Johnson’s *The Body in the Mind*.( Barcelona & Velenzuela, 2011, p. 2). These works in particular began to gain adherents and many scholars from different countries began to expose linguistic problems from a cognitive standpoint with an explicit reference to Lakoff’s and Langacker’s works.

In 1989, the international cognitive linguistic association (ICLA) was organized and the first international cognitive conference was done in Duisburg, Germany to gather all the researchers working on CL. The journal of Cognitive Linguistics was later in 1990 published and its first issue appeared under the imprint of Mouton de Gruyter. This journal became later the official journal of ICLA. By the 1990, it became to be recognized as an important field

with linguistics, many countries around the world began to hold CL research and activities such as Korea, Hungary, Croatia, France, Belgium and others, they all formed regional CLA associations affiliated to the ICLA. (Newman, 2007, pp. 3-4).

Regionally speaking, CL has first emerged in the United States mainly in the western seaboard. During the 1980's, the research of CL began to take the root to the northern continental Europe, particularly in Belgium, Holland and Germany. In the early 1990's there was a growing proliferation of research in CL throughout Europe and North America and later it was well-known worldwide with the emergence of the ICLA. (Evans, 2007, p.1)

In the present day cognitive linguistics theories have become sufficiently sophisticated and detailed to begin making predictions that are testable using the broad range of converging methods from the cognitive sciences.

### **3. The Theoretical Principles of CL:**

The theoretical aspects of CL have been divided differently according to different linguists. For some linguists CL has two fundamental tenets that will be treated in the coming lines but before that, we will deal with what Lakoff has brought in 1990: the two key commitments of CL and which are the standpoints of mainly all divisions that came later.

#### **3.1. Two key commitments of CL:**

Lakoff argued that the CL enterprise is characterized by two fundamental commitments:

##### **3.1.1. The Generalization commitment:**

'It represents a dedication to general principles that apply to all aspects of human language... These principles are embodied notably by the work of Noam Chomsky and the paradigm of Generative Grammar as well as the tradition known as Formal Semantics, inspired by the philosopher of language Richard Montague' (Evans, 2007, p. 3).

Generalization Commitment separate language faculty into distinct areas such as phonology, syntax, semantics, morphology and so forth. These areas of study are concerned with different kinds of structuring principles resulting in different kinds of modulings. For instance, syntax moduling is the area responsible for structuring words into sentences, and phonological moduling is the area responsible for structuring sounds patterns permitted by rules of any given language. These modulars are encapsulated in the human mind. However, within Generalization Commitment CL do not start with these modular?

### **3.1.2.The Cognitive Commitment:**

Evans and his colleagues have described it as follows:

‘It is the representation of a commitment providing a characterization of the general principles for language that accords with what is known about the mind and the brain from other disciplines. It is the commitment that makes cognitive linguistics cognitive, and thus an approach which is fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature.’ (Evans, 2007, p. 4)

Cognitive Commitment sees natural language as an intermediate that reflects what is known about the human mind, it is in other words the structural system that is not only a cognitive faculty but also these linguistic structures should represent what is known of the other human cognitive sciences or disciplines such as psychology, cognitive neurosciences, artificial intelligence and so on.

Other viewpoints about cognitive linguistic distinction came after as we have mentioned above in the definition section, the first division brought by Antonio Barcelona and JanvieVenzuela (2011) is as follows:

### **3.2. Non-Modularism vs Non-Objectivists:**

**3.2.1. Non-Modularism:** It sees language as a human ability and CL here doesn't give much importance to the way people learn their language and how do they use it. It is rather interested in studying language as a mental process, 'a special innate mental module' (Barcelona & Velanzuela. 2011. P, 4). This view is strongly advocated by generativist theories mainly that of Chomsky and his followers like Jackendoff. For those who claim this view of language, generative cognitive ability is like any other cognitive abilities for instance our kinesthetic, visual or sensorimotor cognitive abilities which are joined with cultural, functional and contextual parameters in the world around us. "The so called "language faculty" is, thus, claimed to be a product, or rather a specialization, of general cognitive linguistics."(Barcelona & Velanzuela. 2011. P, 4)

Cognitive linguistics concepts like embodiment and motivation are there for constructed and understood on the basis of experience which is apparently opposite to the viewpoint that was permanent during the twentieth century that of the arbitrariness of the linguistic signs.

**3.2.2. The "Non-Objectivist" or "Blueprint":** this is the second viewpoint of cognitive linguistics within the second division:

"Cognitive linguists claim that meanings do not 'exist' independently from the people that create and use them, as Reddy brilliantly showed long time ago in a now classic essay (Reddy 1993(1979)). Therefore, they rejected what both Lakoff(1987) and Johnson(1987) have termed 'objectivism' in linguistics and philosophy, since there is no objective reality which is independent from human cognition. And linguistic forms, as Fillmore and Langaker say are just

“blueprints” that activate the conceptual structure that we have formed in our mind, but have no *inherent* meaning in themselves. Meanings reside in our minds and our brains. Linguistic forms just activate them’ (Barcelona&Velenzuela. 2011. P, 5)

Non- objectivist linguists claim that all the linguistic structure are dependent on the human cognition and meaning never exist without its users this rejects what has been brought by Lakoff and Johnson(1987) which sees that the structural forms are independent from the human mind. It is in fact just blue-printst that carry no meaning by themselves and they need to be attached to meaning which reside in the human mind though these forms are sometimes conventionally linked to other forms as pairs.

### **3.3.A New Division OF CL:**

A recent division of the theoretical principal of CL which differs from this previous one mainly in the terminology, is also divided into two main pillars.

#### **3.3.1. Language as an Integral Part of Cognition:**

Since language is a product of general cognitive ability, the cognitive linguist must study the relation between language as a system and the other cognitive faculties that is the human mind, and this is what Lakoff has called the “cognitive commitment”. To put it differently, the cognitive linguist needs to know both about the linguistic principles together with the differences at the linguistic forms (syntax, semantics, phenology, etc.) simultaneously.

#### **3.3.2. Language is Symbolic in Nature:**

It is theidea adopted from the Saussurian notion of sign. This viewpoint sees language as a combination of the semantic representation and the phonological representation. This association of the two poles is arbitrary to a certain level but not totally arbitrary. As Sweeter has argued that: ‘we intuitively notice that there must we can use the same verb *ikusi*in the two ‘apparently’ unrelated domains perception and

cognition, we sense that this choice is not random, but well-motivated' (Sweetser, 1990, P. 5).

The two divisions presented above are mainly the same, what is different is the appellation used to name each one. In fact, the linguistic knowledge witnessed a shift from knowledge about the language to knowledge of the world mediated by the language, this shift in the type of knowledge led to diverse forms of CL which can be headed under two main approaches; the structural characteristics of natural language which is named as “non-objectivist” and as “language is symbolic in nature” in the two preceding divisions respectfully and that is represented by the formalist stance of Generative Grammar, and the functional principals of linguistic organization which is respectfully named as “non-modularism” and as “language as an integral part in cognition” in the above divisions and that is represented by the functionalist viewpoint.

#### **4. The Main Areas of Research in CL:**

CL as an entire enterprise is divided into two best areas of research: cognitive semantics and cognitive approaches to grammar let us discover the two in what follows.

##### **4.1. Cognitive Semantics:**

Cognitive semantics is interested in units of language and how are they formed and linked to create meaningful words, idioms, phrases and large sentences. The cognitive semanticist is concerned in modelling the human mind as related to the linguistic semantics that is the different approaches to study the cognitive principles that gave rise to the linguistic organization and to provide a more descriptive account of linguistic units. As it has been mentioned by Evans:

‘Cognitive semantics is concerned with investigating the relationship, experience and conceptual system and the semantic structure encoded by language. In specific terms, scholars working in cognitive semantics

investigate knowledge representation (conceptual structure) and meaning construction (conceptualization)'. (Evans, 2007, p. 5)

Besides, as CL, cognitive semantics is a large enterprise which is neither unified nor stabilized framework that attracts researchers of different interests and foci.

## **4.2.Cognitive Approaches to Grammar:**

Cognitive linguists in this concern are interested in developing mechanisms and principles that gave rise to properties of grammar, characterizing the linguistic constructions that generate grammar and focusing on grammatical change to explain the process of "grammaticalization". Thus, "A cognitive approach to grammar is concerned with modelling the language system (the mental grammar) rather than the nature of mind per se...this follows as meaning is central to grammar". (Evan, 2007, p. 5). Figures working on this area are mainly Ronald Langacker in his cognitive grammar, Leonard Talmy and whose theories can be headed under what is called "Construction grammars". These variant cognitive approaches to grammar can be guided by two main principles:

**4.2.1. The Symbolic Thesis:** "The symbolic thesis" as Langacker has called it, or "construction" as called in the construction grammar. A "construction" has in fact an essential symbolic function, it is the fundamental unit of grammar. As Langacker argued; it 'has two poles: a semantic pole (its meaning) and a phonological pole (its sound)' (Evan, 2007, P. 21).

This goes together with the Saussurian notion of sign which consists of "signified" and "signifier" which are psychological entities.

**4.2.2. The Usage-based Thesis:** the mental knowledge or the mental grammar is shaped through the use of linguistic units or symbolic units, in this model, in other words, knowledge of language is the knowledge of how language is used (competence and performance in general terms). Many linguists have adopted this

model not only to approaches to cognitive grammar but also to approaches to language acquisition and language change. (Evans, 2007, p. 22)

## **5. The Main Methods in CL:**

Within the framework of CL there is mixture of methods applied to the study of language all along its development. At the very beginning, much of the work was based purely on linguistic intuitions. Later, by the growing of the field theoreticians' awareness grow as well, observation and experimental tests of the within the developed sub disciplines of CL and cognitive sciences such as: cognitive grammar, psycholinguistics, conceptual integration and so forth. ie a movement of empirical studies. Thus, a commitment within cognitive linguists to develop empirical methods in cognitive linguistics that will be a kind of bridge between theoretical and empirical works. (Conzalez-Marquez, 2007, p. 23).

In the following lines, we will list out about the major theoretical approaches in CL:

### **5.1. Talmy's Grammatical Vs Lexical Sub-Systems Approach:**

It assumes the symbolic thesis and, like other cognitive approaches to grammar, views grammatical units as inherently meaningful. However, Talmy's model is distinguished by its emphasis on the qualitative distinction between grammatical (closed-class) and lexical (open-class) elements. (Evans, 2007, p. 21)

For Talmy, the "closed-class" and the "open- class" represent a distinct conceptual subsystem compose of two qualitatively distinct elements: "grammatical subsystem" and the "lexical subsystem".As mentioned in cognitive linguistics enterprise: an overview; "while close-class elements encode schematic or structural meaning, open-class elements encode meanings that are far richer in terms of content."(Evans, 2007, p. 21)

**5.2. Cognitive Grammar:** This theoretical framework was developed in the 1970's by Ronald Langacker ;

Langacker's approach attempts to model the cognitive mechanisms and principles that motivate and license the formation and use of symbolic units of varying degrees of complexity. Like Talmy, Langacker argues that grammatical or closed-class units are inherently meaningful. Unlike Talmy, he does not assume that open class and closed class units represent distinct conceptual subsystems. (Evans, 2007, p. 23)

Langacker's model of grammar is broadly larger than that of Talmy in the sense that both types of units that are the closed-class and the open-class belong to a conventionalized linguistic unit which represents the linguistic knowledge in the speaker's mind.

### **5.3. Constructional Approaches to Grammar**

Lakoff (1977) has defined it as follows: "Constructional approaches to grammar are based on the observation that the meaning of a whole utterance is more than a combination of the words it contains; the meaning of the whole is more than the meaning of the parts." (Evans, 2007, p. 25). There are mainly four varieties of this model: the first developed by Fillmore and Paul Kay in 1988 which is called Construction Grammar, the second developed by Adele Goldberg in 1995 and it is called Goldberg's Construction Grammar, the third developed by William Croft in 1996 called Radical Construction Grammar, and the fourth developed by Benjamin Berg and Nancy Chang in 2005 called Embodied construction grammar which is the recent model.

## **1. Cognitive Approaches to Grammaticalization:**

Croft in 1996 has defined Grammaticalization, he sees that it is:

“Grammaticalization is the process of language change where by grammatical or closed-class elements evolve gradually from the open-class system. Because it relates to language change, the process of grammaticalization is also of interest to typologists”(Evans et al. 2007. P, 28). Many linguists have applied this model in CL studies like Sweetser, Dasher(1990) and Traugott(2002) which attempt to give more explanation to the grammaticalization process.

## **6. The Future of CL:**

As we have seen in the preceding paragraphs, the flexibility and openness of CL contributes to its attractiveness. It draws researchers' attention with diverse interests; a huge number of tendencies of different disciplines are combined under the head of CL. This obviously implies that there will be further developments within this framework. Through these developments there are mainly three issues that are likely to characterize the future of CL:

The notion of decontextualization during the twentieth century was a main characteristic that would later by the coming of CL be replaced by the contextualization tendencies because CL by its cognitive nature looks at language from a psychological point of view. However, there are some linguists who argue that the embodiment of language or the experientialist nature of CL doesn't imply only the material or the physical sense of language but the cultural and the sociological aspect of language should be recognized as primary elements of the cognitive approach. This emphasis on the social aspects of language should not neglect the internal linguistic variation. In other words, a cognitive linguist should develop interests in language as a social

phenomenon and at the same time should pay more attention to language internal variation in accordance with the social aspect of language.

If we understand empirical methods to refer to forms of research that do not rely on introspection and intuition but that try to ground linguistic analysis on the firm basis of objective observation, then we can certainly witness a growing appeal of such empirical methods within cognitive linguistics.(Oxford handbook, 2012, p. 13).

In this respect, the growing tendency of CL gave rise to new methods like Usage-based approach in which you cannot have a usage-based model unless you study the actual usage as in corpus based studies. Further, if CL is part of Cognitive Sciences, it would be natural if we use the techniques used in the cognitive scientific studies. For example, the Experimental psychology has been long used in studies of cognition, so it could be used in CL.

The third point is as follows: ‘CL is far from being unified and stabilized body of knowledge’ (Oxford handbook of Cognitive Linguistics, 2012, p. 15). However, CL may be unified in the future, that is researches from the cognitive linguistic community are expected to do more efforts in order to make CL look stabilized and unified as one approach.

**Conclusion:**

To sum up, this chapter was devoted to give a clear idea to those readers who have no knowledge about CL and to refresh the minds of those who already have some knowledge about it. CL as we have seen is a recent linguistic theory that came as a reaction against those formal approaches to language that existed during the 1970's. It studies the relation between language and the human mind including the pragmatic aspects of language. The leading figures of CL are mainly those who have made the first attempts in this field during the 1970's and the 1980's like Langacker, Lakoff, Fillmore. CL is the head under which there are different theoretical and methodological principles were developed. Actually through time this framework has become the largest field of research within the other Cognitive sciences.

In the present time international associations and journals are organized to gather all CL ideas and interests, and to offer researchers with interests in the field with all viewpoints and ideas existing within CL and to keep them in touch with the recent attempts in the field. Though there are some people who see it as a non-unified and non-stabilized discipline, still it of great importance in the field of language study. For this reason we want to tackle a theory within this field which is the Usage Based Theory of Language Acquisition that we will talk about in the coming chapter. That is it wouldn't be possible to start directly talking about it unless we give a kind of backgrounding the flour and introducing to what field it belongs since it is a new theory. Another reason for exploration of Cognitive Linguistics in this chapter is that it has recently been stable and marginalized there were few attempts in this concern. So we wanted to bring it to stage of research by introducing a new theory of it.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **THE USAGE BASED THEORY**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

In this chapter, we will be talking about Usage Based Approach to language acquisition as the core element of the whole work. It is a new approach in cognitive linguistics that attracts much of recent linguists' attention. It sees language from a different angle that doesn't cope with the preceding cognitive approaches. Unlike the naturalists and the formalists, Michael Tomasello's (an emergent) account to language acquisition remains coherent and constant to a certain extent, in the sense that it encompasses many aspects of the language that were seemingly missing or not taken into consideration. In the following pages, we will attempt to define the UBT and introduce Michael Tomasello as the founder of this theory and later we will deal with issues related to his theory.

### **1. Definition of UBT:**

The UBT has been introduced by many linguists long before Michael Tomasello did, it has been defined by Bybee (2001) as follows:

Usage Based Linguistics is a relatively recent approach to linguistics theory that has rapidly risen in prominence in the last two decades. Like most approaches to linguistics theory, Usage-based Approach is interested in explaining why languages are the way they are. Usage-based linguists take a dynamic approach to explanation: what we seek to explain are the patterns of language change, and we take the true universals of language to be the cognitive and the social mechanisms responsible for language change. (As cited in Kapasinski, 2014, p. 1)

UBT is one of the central tenets of cognitive linguistics where 'language is seen as a dynamic system of emergent symbolic units and flexible constraints that are shaped by general processes involved in language use' (Diessel, 2012, p. 1). It is one of the well-known

theories of the current cognitive linguistics. Unlike structuralism and generativist linguistics where language in general and grammar particularly are analyzed without reference to usage, in this approach to language acquisition, grammar and usage are “inextricably connected”. Usage events and social experiences are in fact the bases upon which this approach stands, and the source from which grammar emerges and is constructed in the individuals’ minds. This view is advocated in the Oxford bibliographies where UBT has been defined as follows:

The general goal of this approach is to develop a frame work for the analysis of linguistic structure as it evolves from general cognitive processes...In order to understand why language structure is the way it is, usage-based linguists study language development, both in history and in acquisition. On the assumption that language development is crucially influenced by the language user’s experiences with particular linguistic element, usage-based linguistics have emphasized the importance of frequency of occurrence for the analysis of grammar.(Diessel, 2012, p.1)

Although many aspects of the Usage Based model still are under-specified and seen as assumptions, there are lots of contributions to a successful refinement of the overall model.

Historically speaking, UBA ‘has grown out of the same line of research of the constructionists’ view of language processing with a focus on the linguistic representations and the social experiences from which we get these representations. (Zeschel, 2008, p. 1)

The term “Usage-based” dates back to Langacker (1987). However, there are some views which see its roots go even back to Greenberg and some colleagues during the 1960’s and later in the 1970’s under the leadership of Givens. Other figures who participated in the creation of this approach are Li (1976), Hopper and Thompson (1980, 1984), Bybee (1985, 1995) and Croft (2000) for whom all things flow from the actual usage events in which people

communicate linguistically with one another. In other words, great emphasis of this approach (even in its beginning) is on the usage events which results from the accumulation of linguistic experiences at a given moment in time. “All these linguists propose that grammar is created by conventionalization of the commonly used discourse patterns”. ((Zeschel, 2008, p. 4).

Michael Tomasello is an active figure in the Field of CL of the time being, he gave much importance to this approach (UBT) and has done lots of studies and researches in this concern. For him children learn language gradually as they grow up from their social environment and thanks to their cognitive skills ( intention reading and pattern finding) rather than acquiring language thanks to an innate universal grammar as the nativists argue. These two skills are defined as the following:

“**Intention reading**’ is what the children must do to determine mature speakers when they use linguistic conventions to achieve social ends, and thereby to learn these conventions from them culturally, with accordance with the functional approach mentioned above.

‘**Pattern finding**’ is what the child must do to abstract linguistic schemas or construction from the individual utterances, with accordance with the grammatical approach mention above. There for, this theory has two dimensions: the functional and the grammatical’(Ghalbi&Sadighi, 2015, p.191). So, for Tomasello the focus if UBT lies in the in his own words as follows:

‘Usage-based models of language focus on the specific communicative events in which people learn and use language. In these models, the psycholinguistic units with which individuals operate are determined not by theoretical fiat but by analysis of children’s language, since children do not learn and use the same units as adults’ Bybee (1985, 1995), Croft (2000). ( Tomasello, 2000, p.1)

That is to say, people identify their psychological units with which they operate, through the observation of their linguistic constructions as they were children and the study of those constructions and how do children develop from a zero linguistic storage to countless number of constructions as he grew up. Thus, The UBT answers the question what are the psychological units with which the process of language acquisition begins? And according to Usage Based linguists, the UBA to linguistic communication may be summarized in the two aphorisms that Tomasello has introduced in his usage based model to language acquisition: “meaning in use” and “structure emerges from use”.

1- Meaning in use: represents an approach to the functional or semantic dimension of linguistic communication’. This view was oriented by many philosophers of language like Wittgenstein (1953) and others who wanted to combat the idea that meanings are things and focus instead on the way people use the linguistic conventions to achieve social ends.

2- Structure emerges from use: represents an approach to the structural or the grammatical dimension of linguistic communication’. This approach is represented an implicit manner of many linguists such as Langacker ( 1987,2000) and others who wanted combat the idea of wholly formal grammar and instead focus on grammatical constructions that emerge from use. It focuses on how meaning-based grammatical constructions emerge from individual acts of language use.

## **2. About Michael Tomasello:**

Michael Tomasello was born on January 18th, 1950 in Bartow, Florida. He has received his bachelor’s degree from Duke University in Durham, North California (1972) and his doctorate in experimental psychology from University of Georgia in Athens (1980). He was a professor of psychology and then of anthropology at Emory University in Georgia (1980-1998) and he conducted a research in Yerkes National Primate Research center (1982-1998).

He is a co-director at Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig (1998-2018). From (1999-2018), he is an honorary professor in psychology at Leipzig University and later in (2001-2018) he is pointed as a co-director at Wolfgang Kohler Primate Center. Nowadays, (2016- ) he is a professor of psychology at Duke University.

In addition to that, Tomasello is one of the few scientists worldwide who have been acknowledged as experts in multiple disciplines, his research interests range from cognitive processes in apes to developmental psychology and language acquisition in children. In all these fields he has authored an impressive list of publications starting from 1983. Among his well-known publications ‘Cultural Learning’ in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (1993), Primate Cognition (1997), The Cultural Origins of Human Cognitive (1999), Constructing a Language: A Usage Based Theory of Language Acquisition (2003) which is an outstanding framework in that has brought a totally different approach to language acquisition. The Chomskyan era which seemed unfinished was interrupted by his interference with his valid hypothesis (to some extent), other works such as Origins of Human Communication (2008), Communication about Absent entities in great apes and human cognition (2015), ... He has been a visiting scholar, professor and institutor at Harvard University, University of Rome, Stanford University and UC Berkeley.

In his research on children language acquisition as an important aspect of the “enculturation process” which is our concern in this thesis, he has highlighted new paradigms of language acquisition. He is a critic of Noam Chomsky’s the Innate Universal Grammar, He has proposed instead Learnability, for him the child learns linguistic structures through “Intention reading” and “Patterns finding” skills during their interactions with others. This theory has different appellations: it is called Usage Based Approach, Social Pragmatic or Functional Theory of Language Acquisition. Earning many prizes and rewards from the end of 1990’s onward. He received the Guggenheim Fellowship (1997-1998), William James

Book Award and The American Psychological Association(2001), Fyssen Foundation Prize for Cognitive Sciences(2004) and many other prizes mainly each year until 2015 prize of Distinguishing Scientific Contribution, American Psychological Association prizes. These prizes stand as evidence for his contributions and research interests in different disciplines. In addition to his research achievements, Tomasello has reached out a wider public lectures and television programs. Despite the growth and development of Tomasello's account of research, his core thesis remains 'the crucial difference between human cognition and that of other species is the ability to participate with others in collaborative activities with shared goals and intentions'.(Tomasello et al, 2005, p. 28).

### **3. The Origin of Language from Usage Base View:**

Knowing the origin of language from UBT view will give more explanation of this theory, and it will clarify the common points with the other theories and those which are different too. Tomasello in his book *Constructing a language: A Usage Based Theory of Language Acquisition* (2003) has talked about the origin of language. In fact, he sees that human system of communication is totally different from that of other animal species which is unique. The human species form different communicative conventions between their community members which result in countless number of communication systems. He goes on deeper in explaining language origin by introducing the phylogenetic and the ontogenetic origins.

#### **3.1. Phylogenetic Origin:**

Unlike Chomsky's view which sees that the fundamental grammatical categories and linguistic relations all over the world come from a biological adaptation in a form of grammatical universals, Tomasello sees that there is no need to posit a genetic adaptation, grammaticalization and syntacticalization are cultural-historical processes rather than biological ones. For this reason, we found that constructions are not created

all at ones, they first emerge then they evolve and start to be accumulated and modified through the historical development as human beings adopt them to their linguistic needs. These changes take place at the level of words and at the level of more complex constructions as well. For the former we take the English example of the phrase “in the side of” which becomes “inside of” and then it changes into “inside”, these linguistic changes are from word to word. However, for the latter it happens at the level of construction, where the construction loses its discourse sequences. That is, instead of sequences of words it results in one word or instead of whole phrases it results in new kind of organization, for example instead of “he pulled the door and it opened” we say “he pulled the door opened” or “My boyfriend...he plays piano...he is in a band” becomes “My boyfriend plays piano in a band”. (Tomasello, 2003, pp. 9-14)

### **3.2. The Ontogenetic origin:**

In the human ontogeny, the child’s symbolic communication emerges at the prelinguistic communication period at around one year old. It is the establishment of group of social-cognitive skills: joint attentional frame, the understanding of the communicative intentions, and a particular type of cultural learning known as role reversal imitation which Tomasello referred to as “intention reading”. The prelinguistic infant has also the “pattern-finding” skill which works at the age when the child is able to acquire linguistic symbols; it enables him to acquire grammatical constructions of the languages they exposed to. (Tomasello, 2003, p.19)

These are Tomasello’s hypotheses of phylogenetic and the ontogenetic origins of language from a usage based perspective. In which the first is the symbolic dimension characterized by the ability to understand the others intentions (intention reading) and the second the grammatical dimension characterized by pattern-finding in adult’s

linguistic symbols. By the combination of these two, intention reading and pattern-finding, the human language develops over historical time

#### **4. Tomasello's Account of Skills Necessary for Language:**

In 1999, Tomasello has first introduced the Intention Reading and Pattern Finding Skills as the unique human skills. However, recently he observed that “great apes understand much of what others work as intentional agents like the self...in a way very similar to young human children” (Tomasello, 2008, p. 45). For this reason, Tomasello revisited his conclusion about the skills necessary for language.

##### **4.1. Intention-reading:**

This skill is maintained as a fundamental and necessary capacity to acquire language. For Tomasello, Intention-reading is “the understanding that others have goals and... make active choices among behavioral means for attaining those goals including active choices about what to pay attention to in pursuit of them.”(Tomasello, 2003, P. 21). Using this skill one can go joint attentional frames which is an interaction of two or more persons where each one understand the other's intentions and thereby he comes to acquire language.(Kessler, Michael Tomasello's on Language Development, nd , pp. 12-14)

##### **4.2. Relevance Assumption:**

Another fundamental skill of language acquisition according to Tomasello is “the ability to make assumptions of relevance within the domain of joint attentional scene”. (Kessler, Michael Tomasello on Language acquisition, nd, p. 17). He defines the linguistic context as not only everything in the immediate environment but all what is relevant to the social interaction. And relevance alone is necessary, but not sufficient for comprehensive communication. Assumption and motivations of mutual helpfulness

between members of joint attentional frame also enable them communicate successfully. (Kassler, Michael Tomasello's on Language Development, nd , pp. 17-20)

### **4.3. The Role Reversal Imitation:**

Tomasello claimed that intention reading and relevance assumption abilities are necessary for learners of language to possess in order to maintain understanding and interactional within the joint attentional communication, he goes on saying that these two abilities are not sufficient and language development won't take place unless the ability and motivation of imitation occur. He explained what is meant by Role-reversal imitation as the process by which "an individual who comprehends how a communicator is using some communicative device towards her ... then reproduces that use in her own communicative back towards others in kind"( Tomasello, 2008, p. 103). Thus, one can say that imitation here is that an imitator substitute himself to the role of the performer according to his conceptual understanding of the role performed and to substitute the others to his own original role as a recipient.(Kassler, Michael Tomasello's on Language Development, nd , p. 30)

### **4.4. Pattern-finding and Grammaticalization:**

It is not very important as the preceding skills Tomasello argued. He thinks that it is rather a skill evolutionary old and it is possessed by all pieces. He gave an example of pattern finding in English language he said that the English construction "X got Y -ed by" has specific meaning which is mainly Y-ing is an action Z performed upon X. Thus, learners hearing repeated instances of this pattern( e.g. "the baby got scolded by the mommy") will be able to decipher the pattern meaning as they would the meaning of a single word. He said using their general skills of intention-reading and pattern-finding. They understand their communicative functions of utterances... by reading intention of the speaker. They then find patterns across item based constructions by schematization

and making analogies.(Tomasello, 2003, p. 143). By this process which resembles a lot to the process of word learning as he sees, is the only way children can learn language. (Kassler, Michael Tomasello's on Language Development, nd , pp. 41-45)

By combing these skills, Tomasello has created the UBT of Language Acquisition. He sees that the child when born he is equipped with two sets of cognitive skills which enables him first to understand and comprehend the adults intentions and then to imitate and develop adult-like linguistic symbolic and constructions at an advanced age.

## **5. Grammar Development in UBT:**

### **1- Grammar Development:**

In UBT, grammar development starts from usage events, children build up their linguistic constructions from their usage events. At the beginning, they start building up simple and more concrete constructions with relations between them. Then as they grew up, they start forming more complex constructions from their social contexts. Knowing that constructions can be utterance level (for instance transitive construction) or below utterance level (for instance morphological construction) each construction has a function as a whole. In order to reach the adult level construction which is abstract and more schematic (than phonologically specific) children generally take a long time and they find difficulties in linking between the function and structure of a construction, because their constructions are lexically specific and contain "low scope of slots" so they are less schematic than those of adults. However, with more usage experiences as their grammar develops, their constructions contain more parts and they become more abstract and schematic.

To put it differently, at initial period, children's constructions start by being fully "lexically specific", some constructions develop so quickly that part of it start to be schematic and when they can add new items into their slots at this level schematization level has been

reached which is an evidence that “form-function” abstraction is learnt. As examples from the English language for “form-function” abstraction is the transitive (SVO form), the use of the same “form-function” abstraction across utterances, the analogical difference between different constructions (such as ‘I hitting it’/‘Daddy drop cup’...) and the transformation of utterance in one construction into another construction like from active to passive, these are evidence that constructions are fully schematic.

## 2- **Prelinguistic Communication:**

It is however very important to add to our knowledge that this theory is not interesting in explaining children’s language development from the time they start talking uniquely (utterance forming), but it also gives great importance to the child’s prelinguistic communication that starts even before birth. “In the usage-based view one must always begin with communicative function, and it turns out that infants communicate in some fairly sophisticated ways before they have acquired any linguistic conventions”. (Tomasello, 2008, p. 70)

Tomasello, in the explanation of the UBT, one of his main foci was how do children communicate and understand the adults intentions and how do they express their needs successfully without using any linguistic conventions. Tomasello and Lieven added: “we will be almost exclusively concerned with the development of syntax and morphology, but it is important to remember that before children show evidence of approaching the task of syntax learning they have been immersed in language-rich environment from before birth. Studies in the field of children linguistic development have proved that child at the 12 to 18 months starts to develop two kinds of abilities the linguistic ability that is the development of segments, pattern recognition ( identifying) and word recognition and at the same time he develops cognitive and social abilities such as categorization and understanding the others

intentions. By linking these two: pattern recognition and intention understanding, the child is mapping between the form and function of the very first words he learns in the word learning period, as he grows up his learning will develop and he will move as it has been mentioned earlier from holophrases to concrete constructions then to more adult- like constructions which are more abstract and correct. (Robinson, C Ellis, 2008, p.169)

## 6. Factors Affecting Usage Based Grammar:

From a usage based perspective grammar is affected by many factors that are as follows.

1. **Frequency:** many researches have shown that frequency affects the child's linguistic learning. The more utterances, morphemes and words are frequent the earlier they are learnt. Tomasello and others have done many experiments that had the same results, he and some colleagues (2001-2005) have done a series of "weird word order" where the children were exposed to a series of words to order them they were more likely correct in words which are more frequent than novel words, these experiments were done both on English children and French speaking children and they had the same results.(Robinson, C Ellis, 2008, p. 172)

In UBT there are two kinds of frequency:

- a) **Token Frequency:** we say that a construction is high in token frequency if it is instantiated many times by the same lexical item, and low in token frequency if the construction, together with the lexical item, is infrequent in use (Bybee&Beckner, n d , p. 841).For instance in English irregular verbs, some verbs are low token frequent because they are more likely to regularize ( weep- weeped) and others are high token frequent since they maintain their irregularity.

**b) Type Frequency:** is a property of pattern or construction and refers to the number of distinct items that can occur in the open slot of a construction or the number of items exemplifying a pattern such as a phonetic sequence. For instance:

In English the past tense inflection “ed” applies to thousands of verbs and thus it has very high type frequency. ( Bybee&Beckner, nd, p. 841)

2. **Consistency:** Children when learning a language are in fact learning the form-function mapping or what is known as the adult like construction. To reach this, children must know how consistent the mapping of the form and the function is. We mean by consistency here, the homogeneity between them. ‘It can probably be at many levels: for instance at the level of phonological form as well as at the semantic function. Thus, if one function maps for many forms and vice versa, this likely to make the child’s task harder’ (Robin, C Ellis, 2008, pp. 179-180). This is again, a proof that consistency of form- function mapping affects the acquisition of language.
  
3. **Complexity:** Great importance has been given to the factor of complexity since it affects the children’s learning and acquisition of the language. It has been mentioned before that children start acquiring utterances and holophrases and then they learn more complex constructions such as words and phrases to reach the form-function construction which is highly complex and abstract. Thus, the less complex the construction is the more the child learn it. However, complex constructions take time and demand more efforts. Lieven and Tomasello added that ‘...a rote-based construction with no analyzed parts will be less complex than a schematic construction...’ (Robinson & C Ellis, 2008, p. 181) like for instance learning verb forms and then generalizing it to form nouns and adjectives and so on.

Specifically speaking, each of these factors are subdivided into other factors, but as a whole and from a usage based view the child's learning process is affected by:

Frequency, Consistency and Complexity of the construction they hear and create.

## **7. The Main Concepts in UBT:**

UBT of language acquisition has introduced new terms to the field of linguistics or may be new appellations for already existing phenomena in preceding theories that need to be highlighted in this work since it is devoted to this theory.

### **7.1. Communicative Intention:**

It may be defined as one person expressing an intention that another person shares attention with her to some third entity (Tomasello, 2000, p. 63). It can only be comprehended, as Wittgenstein has explain, if they are expressed within the context of some already "form of life that serves as their functional grounding ( Tomasello, 2000, p. 64)

### **7.2. An Utterance:**

It is the most fundamental unit in UBT. It is a linguistic act in which one person expresses toward the other, with a single intonation contour, a relatively coherent communicative intention in a communicative context.( Tomasello, 2000, p. 64)

### **7.3.A Schema:**

A cognitive representation comprising a generalization over perceives similarities among instances of usage. Schemas arise from repeated activation of a set of co-occurring properties and are used to produce and understand linguistic expression.(Kemmer&Berlow, 2000, p.17)

#### **7.4. A Construction:**

In usage based theory construction can simply be defined as frequently used and conventional word sequences, they are groupings of words that have idiosyncratic behavior at some level: they might be formally special, but more often they take on an unpredictable meaning or pragmatic effect. (Bybee, 2012, p.51)

#### **7.5. Cognitive Representation:**

They are representations of particular items in the human mind built up as language users encode utterances and categorize them on the basis of phonetic form, meaning and context.

#### **7.6. Entrenchment:**

If a schematic construction is very frequent, i.e. high in type frequency, it can be said to be entrenched in the speakers minds, while the more abstract, schematic constructions it represents, will not be well-entrenched. (Casa in Icelandic, Construction Grammar and the Usage Based Model, p.31)

These are some concepts that one may encounter when reading for UBT and which may not be found in another theory elsewhere. We tried to bring up their definitions in order to help the reader have a deep look and profound understanding of this theory.

#### **Conclusion:**

This chapter as a whole was intended to provide a very clear idea about the UBT of Language Acquisition. For UBT, the social and cultural experiences that is, the individual experiences with language and with people of his community are what make human language. It came as a reaction to what has been taken for granted in the recent decades, Tomasello who

is an Emergent, is said to be the founder of this theory for the present time though there are some linguists who participate in great deal to stabilize the basic principles and theoretical issues of this theory Tomasello tried to generalize this approach and its principles so as to apply to all languages. He tried to deny the innate genetic endowment process and instead he suggested the learning process through the cognitive skills and the social pragmatic environment of the individual.

In the coming chapter we will try to see whether this claim is valid to all languages by answering the following question: To what extent is the view of UBT valid to other languages other than English?

**CHAPTER THREE**

**PRACTICAL PART**

## **Introduction:**

In this chapter, we will have a kind of practical issues concerning the UBT of course. It is impossible to explore all aspects of this theory because it is very large and because of shortage of the time devoted of this paper. However, it will be possible to analyze one or two aspects of it that is the main ones. The Verb Island Hypothesis is the core element of the UBT, since it explains how children's first language acquisition is? And how does it develop?

For this reason, in the coming pages we will compare two already done experiments applying Tomasello's Verb-island hypothesis on different children speaking two different languages (English and Mandarin Chinese) in order to check to what extent is this theory applicable to all languages?

### **1. The Verb Island Hypothesis:**

In his UBT, Tomasello introduced the Verb-Island Hypothesis (henceforth VIH), which is an alternative for Chomsky's innate faculty and universal grammar. This hypothesis suggests that the first thing children learn of language is verbs not yet possessed as grammatical categories, but rather as simple and concrete constructions that are picked up individually from what they hear around them. These individual verbs build up what he called the verb-islands, each verb-island has its own mini-syntax which is independent of the other verb-islands. It is as AnatNonio defined it a theory of how children develop a verbal argument structure constructions, it claims that young children's verbs are islands, each developing its own mini-syntax independently of other verbs. Simple patterns are learned by imitation; more complex ones develop from the simpler antecedents for each verb separately".

For Tomasello, instead of having full competence form, children learn language gradually. They start learning concrete instances which are mainly verbs and build up verb-

islands constructions. Later at an advanced age, they learn more abstract knowledge of sentence structures and adult-like constructions related to these pre-learned verbs.

## **2. The First Study by Michael Tomasello on an English Infant “T”**

### **2.1. Description of the Case Study:**

In 1992, Tomasello in his book *First Verbs: A Case Study of Early Grammatical Development*, made a careful study on his daughter “Travis”. An English child in her second year (starting from 16 to 24 months), he kept a detailed diary of her language development during all her two years which creates a rich database that later was computerized as a corpus form. To analyze her grammatical development he studied what is the grammatical category of her very first words using cognitive processes. The Verb Island was his hypothesis for how children acquire language, he tried to prove it through this study, along with the learning through usage event and cultural dimension of language.

### **2.2. The Verb Island Hypothesis: Early Verbs Acquisition in English Language**

In this study, Tomasello analyzed almost all T’s utterances starting from first year. He first recorded the very first words she used and tried to list them out according to their category. There were verbs, prepositions and other categories. Within verbs there were two kind of verbs change of state verbs and sentences which were divided into six domains: (presence absence and recurrence of object, presence absence and recurrence of activities exchange and procession of objects, location of object and exchange, movement objects and state objects), activity verbs which were divided into activities involving objects and activities involving no objects, these were all illustrated by tables containing all T’s words in order to aid researchers in categorizing the individual verbs. In the following however, we will list out tables that

contain some examples of each category of the change of state verbs and the activity verbs from Tomasello's model of study with explanation of each table. After that we will bring the other evidences to the VIH brought by Tomasello.

**Table 1 :Change ofState Verbs: the six categories from 16 to 24 months**

<b>Category</b>	<b>16 – 18</b>	<b>18-20</b>	<b>20-22</b>	<b>22-24</b>
<b>Presence absence and recurrence of objects</b>	Whereda battle Found it funny Peter Pan gone More corn More mouth	Find Danny More find Lulu Salad gone All-gone juice Light on/ On the light	Funny man gone More twinkle Get it another one Daddy bye bye too Paul light on	Where's my bottle I found it Come find me Take more first Turn light on Turn the light off
<b>Presence absence and recurrence of activity</b>	Again fire	Again feet Weezer did it Help a down Cars with me Stop it bike	I will do that Do it self me Come help me Stop push me Let go my hand	I see you up there again I did it
<b>Exchange an procession objects</b>	Bottle get it Back salt Mama hold it	Pizza get it Got it Weezer Back these Hold Weezer Ballon have it	Get it another one Lady got umbrella Star back here Hold me in the lap Have that back	I get it Got to hold it Roll, Get Hold the sholk Want, Got Have more again Give it to me
<b>Location objects</b>	Boy down	Up-here lap Pen down Cake on In there Tape out	Up here me B down in the p-p Milk on my face Leaf of my sock In Mama's car	Up there in the sky On my face Sand on my eye What happened in there
<b>Movement objects</b>	Dady stock My get-out	Big rock stock Move broom Stay here	That stings stock First move this Peter go with me	You stay right there Go to store Come back here

		<b>Come in outside</b> <b>Bring chair</b>	<b>Come off Grover</b> <b>Bring a paper-towel</b>	<b>Bring here in there</b> <b>Bring that for daddy</b>
<b>State objects</b>	<b>Open door</b> <b>Fall down man</b> <b>Hat off</b>	<b>Open the umbrella</b> <b>Window close</b> <b>Drop it ice</b> <b>Spill-it on leg</b> <b>Fix it car</b> <b>Hat off</b>	<b>Open this to shelf</b> <b>Buttle closed</b> <b>Drop down table</b> <b>Spilled Weezer milk</b> <b>Grover broken of</b> <b>Take hat off</b>	<b>Close your eyes</b> <b>Not fall down</b> <b>You dropped that</b> <b>toy</b> <b>I spilled it</b> <b>I never will spilled it</b> <b>Take hat off</b>

(Tomasello, 1992, p. 70. 83-84. 92-93. 103-104. 111-112)

Table 1 contains examples from T early multi-word combinations starting from 16 to 24 months, it shows evidence that most of these combinations are verbs which are learnt at around 18 months. These early verbs are divided into categories and each category form a verb-island that is a verb from one category is not used in the other category. For example the verb found or gone is used during the 16-18 stage in the Presence absence and recurrence object category and they are not used in the location or movement objects. It proves also that T's more complicated structures are constructed out of the materials that were used previously in less complex structures. "92% of T's first 271 three-or- more word sentences involve a single simple change from the previous sentences with the same verb" (Tomasello, 1992, p. 236). Through these words, T expresses a change of state of either the subject or object. One can also from this table that in T's early words, she used preposition not as they are known for adults but in fact she uses them as verbs in the first months of the study and then when she gets older and by the communication with adults their category changed into prepositions.

**Table 2 : Activity Verbs from 16 to 24 Months**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>16-18</b>	<b>18-20</b>	<b>20-22</b>	<b>22-24</b>
<b>Activities involving objects</b>	<b>Mommy hammer</b> <b>Yaya book</b> <b>Catch ball</b> <b>Roll-it baby</b> <b>Cookie bite</b>	<b>Brush it hair</b> <b>Clean this</b> <b>Paint the steps</b> <b>Lock that Lulu</b> <b>Read outside</b> <b>Cut it toes</b> <b>Cooking dinner</b> <b>Driving car</b>	<b>Write on D's chair</b> <b>Cut Weezer</b> <b>Cover me down</b> <b>Ride on Mommy</b> <b>Maria hit me drink</b> <b>mine tea up</b>	<b>Cut it with the knife</b> <b>Cover me up by my</b> <b>silk throw this away</b> <b>Maria hi the squares</b> <b>Can we eat it</b>
<b>Activities not involving objects</b>	<b>Baby crying</b> <b>Pee-pee potty</b>	<b>Set-down chair</b> <b>More jump</b> <b>Wally crying</b> <b>Carol sleeping</b> <b>pee-pee in this room</b> <b>maria look at this</b> <b>watch TV</b>	<b>Travis set down chair</b> <b>Fred walking pillow</b> <b>Run in the street</b> <b>Baby pee-pee</b> <b>Look over here</b> <b>Eggs smell it</b>	<b>Climb up here chair</b> <b>Cry about you</b> <b>See that bear</b> <b>Feel that</b> <b>Hot hurt me</b> <b>Mommy like it</b> <b>I tell you</b> <b>Maria said that</b>

(Tomasello, 1992, p. 130- 134. 143- 146)

This table is a support for the previous evidence; the only difference is the category of verbs. In this case, early verbs are verbs of activity involving object and others involving no object. Besides, depict the syntactic developments of T's early activity verbs, There were not many interesting development in these verbs during the second year of life.

**Table 3 :The Expansion of Noun Phrases in T's early language from 18 to 25 Months**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Actor (preverbal)</b>	<b>Object (post-verbal)</b>	<b>Others</b>
<b>18,11 - 19,00</b>	-	<b>The:</b> Get the pencil Catch the ball	-
<b>19,00 – 19,24</b>	<b>This:</b> This ring mine This ball under here	<b>This/ that:</b> Close this window Ride this Mommy Lock that Lulu	-
<b>19,24 – 21,00</b>	<b>Modifier:</b> Two rugs down Big rock stock Funny mask on me	<b>This/that/the+modifier:</b> Swinging the new pajamas Bite the banana popsicle <b>Two modifiers:</b> Scared of funny other man	<b>The:</b> Draw on the paper Run in the street <b>Modifier:</b> Write on Dady's chair Have juice in my bottle
<b>21,00 – 25,00</b>	All major types in all three columns continue Expanded Actor and Object Noun Phrase: Other bird in the bush		

(Tomasello, 1992, p. 159)

One of the other grammatical structures appeared in T's early multi-words combinations like nouns. But the expansion of these nouns was limited like object, actors and locations which were used less than verbs. Table 3 list out almost all noun phrases that T has used during the observed period, some of which are preverbal (actor) composed of either the demonstrative pronoun this or a modifier. Some others are post-verbal (object) composed of either the determinant The demonstrative pronouns This and That or a modifier; and other cases. However, these cases of noun occurrence are less compared to the over use of verbs.

**Table 4: T's Sentences with more than One Verb (Complex Sentences)**

<b>Complex sentences</b>	<b>Coordinate</b>	<b>subordinate</b>
	<p><b>Come get me stuck</b></p> <p><b>Come on set me</b></p> <p><b>Stop push me</b></p> <p><b>Step cook dinner</b></p> <p><b>Go 7-11 buy more Coca cola</b></p> <p><b>I go outside talk to Maria</b></p>	<p><b>Look at the girl drink kool- aid</b></p> <p><b>I want to take one at a time</b></p> <p><b>I want to hold your tea</b></p> <p><b>Have Mommy fix it</b></p> <p><b>I love to eat Pretzels</b></p> <p><b>It's fun to play with puzzles</b></p>
<b>Complex questions</b>	<p><b>What's that doing there?</b></p> <p><b>What happened?</b></p> <p><b>What color is these?</b></p> <p><b>What is that for?</b></p> <p><b>Can I have more Coca-Cola?</b></p> <p><b>Could I get a knife?</b></p> <p><b>Can you hold me?</b></p>	<p><b>Who is that?</b></p> <p><b>Who's that?</b></p> <p><b>Where you are?</b></p> <p><b>How's this work?</b></p> <p><b>Is that off please?</b></p> <p><b>Does it go, Daddy?</b></p> <p><b>Do I get Coca-Cola?</b></p> <p><b>Wanna bite</b></p> <p><b>Want some too?</b></p>

(Tomasello, 1992, p. 182. 185)

This table provides some examples of T's sentences with more than one verb, within complex sentences; coordinate sentences seem to involve no cognitive or linguistic skills above those she has. Contrary to the subordinate sentences which involve them., the use of these sentences is limited in the beginning but as mentioned before, as she grow up and by integrating other linguistic skills, complex questions are also used but starting from about 23 months these question are sometimes incorrect but yet understood. This means that the child at this stage begun to form adult like sentence that will become widely later on. So, sentences with more than one verb are not used early in T's language but rather later as the child

develop more cognitive and linguistic skills together with adult imitation and cultural learning.

### **2.3. General Results of the Study:**

According to Tomasello (1992), in most cases his subject T's early word combinations involve verbs as the major structuring element. The child first constitutes composite structures through the acts of symbolic integration and mental combination during the stage before 18 months. In the next stage, from 18 to 24 months, the child starts constructing more complex sentences through complex symbolic integration operations. The already learnt construction form "one piece of raw material" for the production of constructions of next coming stages with the addition of few of the complexity elements. Syntagmatic categories are also learned at this period through straightforward processes of cultural learning but they still verb specific and cannot be generalize to other verbs. The absence of the paradigmatic category of verbs is thus the basis for the VIH. After 24 months, T's verbs start to appear in other slots with different verbs

## **3. The Second Study by Yong and Xiao on Two Mandarin children**

### **3.1. Description of the case study:**

This study attempts to explore the nature of early syntax by looking at early verbs in Mandarin Chinese, it studies transcripts from CELA( The Chinese Early Acquisition) of two Mandarin-Speaking kids namely CY and ZHZ who both were born and live in the same town Beijing. The two kids were visited weekly or biweekly for extended period of time (0; 10; 04 – 1; 11; 30 for CY) and (1; 04; 19- 1; 11; 17 for ZHZ), one hour at each visit and the total of all visits is 53 sessions for CY and 24 sessions for ZHZ. The study was done by Yang who

wanted to see whether the VIH will have the same results with the two Mandarin speaking kids.

### 3.2. Verb Island Hypothesis: Early Verbs Acquisition in Mandarin Chinese

**Table1 : The Major Argument Types**

Argument type	Examples	CY	ZHZ
One Argument sentences	Agent (e. g:Ayi chi Aunt eat)	148 (16, 8%)	84 (12 %)
	Theme (e. g: Na zhi hold paper)	258 (29, 3 %)	210 (30 %)
	Recipient ( giejeijeikan to sister do)	16 (1, 8 %)	25 (3, 6 %)
	Location (e. g: tian-shangfei sky-on fly)	26 (2, 9 %)	17 (2, 5 %)
	Experiencer (e. g: Mama kan mother see)	6 (0, 7 %)	8 (1, 2 %)
Two Argument Sentences	Agent-theme( e. g: da hui lang chi ni big grey wolf eat you)	83 (9, 4 %)	35 (5, 1 %)
	Them-location(e. g:qingwa zaizhi frog at here)	43 (4, 9 %)	36 (5, 2 %)
	Experiencer- theme (zanmen ting yinyue we hear music)	9 (1 %)	3 (0, 4 %)
	Recipient- theme ( e.g: gei ta weishui give it feed water)	5 (0, 6%)	25 (0, 3%)
Total no, of Multi word Sentences	–	880	693

(Yang & Xiao, Syntactic Complexity and Productivity,p. 3)

From table 1, Yang and Xiao noticed that both CY and ZHZ were sensitive to the word order of the Mandarin language, they placed the agent in the subject position of both one argument and two argument sentences (over 25% of CY and 17% of ZHZ did do), the theme also appeared about 50% of CY's and about 40% of ZHZ production, it was most of the time in the in pre-verbal position. During the same period, the kids produced series of sentences with no subject nor object that is only verbs. This is very naturally since the nature of language allows null subjects/ objects. These are proofs of the kids early sensitivity of the nature of Mandarin Chinese. The total is that 880 of CY and 693 of ZHZ's early multi words constructions contain verbs does not necessary means that the two kids acquire verbs as fundamental elements but in the case of Mandarin Chinese the nature of the language lacks overt subjects and objects use.

**Table 2 : The Number of Verbs Co-occurring with various Functional Categories**

Structure /Age	1;05- 1;07	1;8- 1;9	1;10- 1;11	Total no in verbs in the structures
<b>CY</b>				
With negators	6	9	32	39/135 (28,9 %)
With focus adverbs	3	6	17	23/135 (17,0 %)
With aspect markers	0	0	9	9/135 (6,7 %)
With modals	1	3	6	10/135 (7,4 %)
<b>ZHZ</b>				
With negators	7	15	20	35/162 (21,6 %)
With focus adverbs	0	4	15	17/162 (10,5 %)
With aspect markers	1	2	4	5/162 (3,1 %)
With modals	0	1	2	3/162 (1,9 %)

(Yang & Xiao, Syntactic Complexity and Productivity, p. 4)

Tomasello claimed that T early multi-words combinations in English are formed via simple integration processes such as coordination, addition or expansion, this may not be the same in the two kids early multi-words constructions because table 2 show that both kids during the observed period used various functional categories such as negators, aspect markers and focus adverbs and these words were placed correctly before verbs as they must be in Mandarin Chinese. Besides, these words co-occur with different verbs and as the two kids grow up, their production of negators and focus markers increases.

**Table 3: Number of Verbs in the Serial Verbs Constructions**

Age / subject	1; 5- 1; 7	1; 8 – 1; 9	1; 10 – 1; 11	Total no , of verbs
CY	2	12	28	36/135 (27%)
ZHZ	2	13	13	24/162 (15%)

(Yang & Xiao, Syntactic Complexity and Productivity, p. 4)

Another important evidence for the VIH from Tomasello's experiment on T's, is that verbs are rarely found in argument slots of higher predicates. Yang Xiaolu checked whether this image is the same for the Mandarin Chinese. Through this table they noticed that the two kids produced serial verb constructions especially CY, about one third of his verbs entered in serial verb construction. In the first period that is from (1; 5 6 1; 7) serial verb production was limited but from the second period (1; 8 - 1; 9) its production was very remarkable.

**Table1 4: Number of Verbs in Compound Sentences**

Age/Structure	Before 1;5	1; 5 – 1; 7	1; 8 – 1; 9	1; 10 – 1;11	Total
<b>CY</b>					
v-v compound	1	8	11	18	20/135
v- reduplication	9	6	4	8	20/135
v- yi-xia	1	2	2	1	6/135
<b>ZHZ</b>					
v-v compound	0	3	16	16	24/165
v- reduplication	0	2	18	10	26/165
v- yi-xia	0	0	1	5	6/165

(Yang & Xiao, Syntactic Complexity and Productivity, p. 5)

Mandarin speaking kids CY and ZHZ used complex construction, their production of early verbs featured complexity in the compound sentences such as V-V Compound, V-reduction and V- yi- xia /V- Yi- V structure. As examples for these compounds from the transcripts of both CY and ZHZ we may have the following for each compound respectfully:

a) Gao (ti-dao) le

The tall building (kick-fall) down. (The tall building fall down)

b) (Mo mo) jiao

(Touch touch) foot. ((You) touch the foot a little)

c) Mama an yi-xia

Mother press one-down. (Mother presses (it) down)

d) Wan yi wan

Play one play. (You play a little)

So, from table 4, one can say that verbs of early Mandarin appear in compound sentences such as V-V Compound and V- reduplication which are common in CY and ZHZ's production as illustrated in the table, and V- yi-xia which is quite rare in this period. This means that verbs in early Mandarin occur in complex constructions and not only in simple ones as in T's early English.

### **2.3. General Results of the Study:**

In the present study, contrary to Tomasello's findings that early verbs in English are characterized by concreteness, particularity and idiosyncrasy. Yang and Xiao found that young Mandarin-speaking children language is characterized by the use of functional categories such as negators and modalizers, The use of two verbs was also noticed in constructions like V- V compound and it was also common in the two children's early language the use of verbs in two or more pattern. These are evidences that early verbs in Mandarin Chinese form more general and coherent syntactic categories and that early child Mandarin is quite productive and complex. The emergence of Syntactic functional Pattern at during the period observed reflects a rapid catastrophic process rather than gradual piecemeal one. An important Question that arises in here is: Why should Mandarin Chinese speaking children's early syntactic development differ from that of English speaking child as reported by studies of Tomasello?

## **4. Comparison between Tomasello's and Yang and Xiao's Studies:**

From all what we have seen in the previous section, Both studies applied the VIH model on to explain and analyze how do children acquire language and what are their earliest linguistic productions? We conclude that both Tomasello and Yang and Xiao came out with different results concerning language acquisition of their subjects though there were some similarities across the follow of the experiments, but these similarities were explained and justified differently according to specific linguistic and social circumstances. In this section we will first identify the similarities and divergences and then we will go further by proposing an alternative model derived from all what we were exposed to during our research and from what we have studied as well.

### **4.1. The Major Similarities and divergences:**

#### **4.1.1. Similarities:**

The opposition of the two researchers' views concerning VIH shows no similarities broadly speaking. However, one can notice some similarities related to the departing points of both of them. The aim of the two studies is to explore the nature of early syntax by first looking at verbs of both English and Mandarin Chinese languages using Tomasello's model the VIH.

In both studies, Tomasello and Yang and Xiao noticed that a wide range or let's say almost all of the children's earliest linguistic productions are verbs. 162 of T's early words are verbs, each verb represents an extend event. However, Yang and Xiao return this use of early verbs in Mandarin Chinese by the two children CY and ZHZ to the nature of the language which allows no subjects/objects. For this reason, children speaking Mandarin will automatically produce verbs rather than anything else as their earliest words.

Another common aspect of parallel thinking in the two studies is that they both did not show evidence to deny the idea of learning through communicative interaction and the cultural learning brought by the VIH. Because Tomasello has talked about the parental learning that children are exposed to during the observed period and Yang and Xiao also mentioned that children are sensitive to the nature of their language, and one cannot know the nature of his language unless he interacts with its users. This is a kind of indirect support to the interactive and cultural learning.

#### **4.1.2. Divergences:**

In the two studies explained previously, in most cases there was a kind of disagreement about the VIH applicability across languages. The different results that researchers came with are a support doubts and disagreements. That we will highlight in what follows:

Contrary to verbs in English which ‘develop along different paths, limited in use and simple in structure’ (Yang & Xiao, *Syntactic Complexity and Productivity*, p. 6), they show a kind of ‘concreteness, particularity and idiosyncrasy’ that is not like word order or prepositional marking. Mandarin Chinese children show great sensitivity to the nature of language. Their use of early verbs was characterized by generality and systematicity, i.e. both children used different functional categories such as negators and modals and the use of two verbs in the early sentences.

Both English and Mandarin children used prepositions in their early languages but with different understanding. The English child T used them first as verbs in her first months and later as she grew up their use changes into adult-like prepositions. Whereas the two Mandarin-speaking children used them from the first time in their adult-like

sense and with their complex cases e.g: the preposition ‘Shang’ (on) which occurs following noun phrases only.

Another phenomenon in T’s earliest production is that her sentences of more than three words were in fact generalized from already produced combinations which were previously constructed on the bases of one verb-island, about 93% over 99% of T’s more than three words sentences were generalized from already produced combinations ( Tomasello, 1995, p. 266). However, in Mandarin Chinese verbs appeared in serial constructions (slots), compounds with higher predicates early in the two children production which is a support that “no verb is an island”.( Ninio, 2003, pp. 8-9)

These are mainly the major similarities and divergences between the two studies by Tomasello and Yang.

#### **4.2. The Validity of the UBT:**

The UBT as any other theory of language acquisition that tried to explain the mystery of the human language, how does one acquire his mother tongue? And what are the mechanisms that enable us to use language? Each theory succeeded to a certain extent to explain from its perspective and from its linguists’ viewpoints this phenomenon, but these explanation were not convincing to 100%. There were always some missing gaps needed to be explained. Tomasello in his UBT departed from the socio-cognitive perspective to study the linguistic phenomenon. Contrary to other linguist, he explained language development by non-linguistic capabilities which are the cognitive and the interpersonal capabilities. By studying these skills, he wanted to go further by studying in non-human apes in order to prove that the cognitive linguistic skills are purely human and characterize the nature of the human being.

By so doing, Tomasello made for himself a new path not only to explain the development of language but also to properties of the human kind that sounds logical and more scientific than the intuitions that language is innate. This does not mean that the UBT is perfect; many of its aspects are doubted. VIH model was applied on many languages but it didn't have the same results as the English language. So, it was not applicable for all languages but still it highlights some aspects that participate in explaining the linguistic phenomenon that were not observed before.

So if we can say that validity is to explain how language develops exactly and typically with no errors than no theory is valid because none of them did so, but if validity is to be logical and accepted by the human mind than as the other theories which brought many aspects of language into light, the UBT is also valid since it tackled aspects of great importance related to language

### **4.3. Recommendations to an Alternative Model:**

The question of the human language has since ever been a dilemma for people interested in this field. From this question many inquires raised and still unclear till the present time, such as: Where does the human language come from? Is language something we are born with or it is acquired from the world around us? What are the processes and mechanisms involved in the linguistic activity? And so on and so forth. However, the abstractedness of language stands as an outstanding characteristic that is hard to be studied and analyzed.

For this reason, all efforts in this concern are doubtful since they stand on hypothetical ideas, i.e. all researches done for the sake of discovering language acquisition were based on intuitions and expectations. Some linguists said that children are born weight blokes and it is the world around them that shape their language. Others said that we are born with an innate linguistic endowment that enables us generate an infinite number of sentences and they

neglected the outer world. Some others came with a new proposal which the social-cognitive skills that are independent of language but responsible for its production. All these are in fact crucial attempts to answer the previous questions. Each one revealed a vague aspect of this phenomenon.

As a concluding point and not an ending one of course, we propose to have a kind of unified approach of all the previous approaches, i. e. an eclectic approach in which we take all the positive aspects of each approach in order to build up a valid model. Because as we think, What really matters for a researcher or a linguist is not that his theory will be right all along the way, but to participate in a way or another to unveil the hidden truth of his research.

So, instead of finding out whether language is innate or acquired, we need to deprive language from all these intuitions and gather all the aspects participating in language production such as the biological, the cognitive, the social and the cultural dimensions and try to find out how do these dimensions complement each other. Because we think that it is not a matter of one or two aspects it is a whole process in which all these aspects are active in order to generate language.

Through this paper, we want to attract attention to a complementary approach taking from all the other approaches. In other words we raise a new question in the concerns of linguistic research: How do the Biological, Cognitive, Social and Cultural dimensions of language complement each other in order to generate language?

### **Conclusion:**

Generally speaking, this chapter was meant to explore the UBT ground and to test to what extent can it be generalized. So it has been applied on different languages and it has various results. This would prove that the validity of this theory is doubted and inapplicable as

we have seen before but this doesn't mean that it is not useful. In the contrary; The UBT has opened a new gap in the linguistic research and it inspired new researchers with different ideas.

## General Conclusion

To conclude, the usage based theory to language acquisition has recently emerged as an independent theory within CL. Since in the beginning, there were crucial participations if not the basis of this theory as we have seen but these participations were not developed enough to form a whole approach to language study. However, with Michael Tomasello, it has been brought to light as a strong claim against the naturalists; he came with evidences to claim his standing point against what is known as innateness. Tomasello is considered as one of the most active figures of the recent researchers in multidiscipline in the present time. In CL he studies human cognition compared to the great apes cognition and he brings various important characteristics and skills for each one that were not known before depending on scientific methods and on authentic data. For this reason, we wanted to test this theory and the evidences brought by Tomasello by having a kind of comparison between two already done studies by two the scientists Tomasello's original study and the Chinese Yang and Xiao's study on children of two years old. The two researchers came out with divergent results by applying the hypothesis of the UBT, the Verb-island Hypothesis.

On one hand, Tomasello says that the English child T in fact in her first months, she starts learning verbs which are simple and ideocentric as individual islands and later as she grows up she will use her skill of role-reversal imitation of the world around her to form more complex constructions, word order is not respected and specially in whquestions. On the other hand, Yang and Xiao found that the two Mandarin Chinese children are very sensitive to the nature of their Mandarin language. They both produce verbs in their early months since the Mandarin Chinese lacksovert subject/ object use but they didn't for verb-island as with the T, they used complex constructions, prepositions and questions in the same way the adults do with some errors of use and respected the word order and syntactic structure of their language.

So, we can deduce that the VIH is not valid for all language, at list not for the Mandarin Chinese in this case and then we can say that the UBT is not valid for all languages for a reason or another. Therefore we cannot generate its evidences but still it is one of the fundamental attempts of language acquisition in CL since it has brought strong claims in this concern and till the present day it is spending huge efforts in the linguistic research. We end up this paper by a proposal for further research for a complementary approach where all theories are unified and bring their valid evidences depending on scientific experiments in order to take the linguistic research a step further to approach scientism and to form a stable material for further research within the field of language acquisition.

## **References**

Barcelone Antonio & Velenzuela Janvie, 2011, An Over View of Cognitive Linguistics, retrieved from researchgate databased. DIO: 10.1075/hcp.32.05bar.

Brodal Johanna, 2001, Case in Icelandic – Part I, Construction Grammar and the Usage-Based Model, Lund University. Scandinavia.

Bybee Jaen. L & Beckner Clay, 2010, Chapter three: A Usage- Based theory.

Bybee Joan L, 2012, Chapter 4: Usage-Based Theory an Exemplar Representation of Constructions, CSLI publication, Standford. California.

Conzalez-Marquez, Monica. Muttillberg, Irene. Coulson, Seana & J. Spilvy, Michael. 2007. John Binjamins publishing Company. Amesterdam. Pheladelphia.

Evans, Vyvyan & Melanie, Green. 2006. Cognitive Linguistics an Introduction. Great Britain. Antony Rowe Ltd.

Geeraerts, Dirk and Hurbert, Cuyckens. 2012. Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics Oxford Handbook online. DIO: oxfordhb/9780199738632. 013. 0001.

Dancyger, Barbara. 2017, International Cognitive Linguistic Association (ICLA) retrieved Cognitive Linguistic Journal. Mouton de Gruyter.

Kapasnisk, Vsevolod. 2014. What is Grammar like? A Usage Based Constructionist perspective, volume 11, issue 1. Retrieved from Theoretical and Computational Morphology: New Trends and Synergies. CSLI publication.

Kessler, Joseph T. (n. d). Michael Tomasello on Language Development: The Puzzle of Human Linguistic Uniqueness. Retrieved from Cognitive Linguistics.

Matsumoto, Nariko. 2008. Bridges between Cognitive Linguistics and Second Language Pedagogy: The Case of Corpora and Their Potential. *SKY Journal of Linguistics* 21(1)127.

Ninio, Anat. 2003. No Verb is an Island: Negative Evidence on the Verb-island Hypothesis. Retrieved from researchgate. Jerusalem, Israel. Harvard University Press.

Tomasello, Michael. 1992. *First Verbs: A Case Study of early grammatical Development*. New York, USA. Cambridge University Press.

Tomasello, Michael. 2000. First Step toward a Usage Based Theory of Language Acquisition. Retrieved from *Cognitive Linguistics* 11-1/2. DIO: 0936-5907/00/0011 -0061. Walter de Gruyter.

Tomasello, Michael. 2003. *Constructing a Language: A Usage Based Theory of Language Acquisition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press.

Tomasello, Michael. 2008. *Origins of Human Cooperation*. Stanford University.

Yang & Xiao. 2005. *Syntactic complexity and Productivity: A Study of Early Verbs in L1 Acquisition of Mandarin Chinese*, Tsinghua University. Beijing.

Zeschel, Arne. (n. d), Introduction: A Usage-based Approaches to Language Processing and Representation. Retrieved from *Cognitive Linguistics* 19 (3).