



Fill-in the blank spaces with a word that would fit. Remember to make sure that the word you have chosen is spelt properly and is grammatically correct. Note that there is not necessarily one correct answer, several words might fit the gap.

Simply science fiction?

The first person to _____ (1) that human beings have a specially built-in device in the brain for learning languages was the American linguist Noam Chomsky. Like so many others before, Chomsky was amazed at the way that small children were able to quickly – and without any apparent effort – begin to understand and _____ (2) a language at such early ages. _____ (3) to the other skills that young children had acquired by, say, the age of three, their language skills were far more advanced. This, for Chomsky, was all the more remarkable since language is such a highly abstract and complex concept. This led him to hypothesise that there is a particular part of the human brain that makes it possible for the child not only to decode and understand language, but also, from the input received, to produce instantly recognizable meanings. He saw this as a kind of ‘black box’ implanted in the brain which he _____ (4) the ‘language acquisition device’, or LAD for short.

Another theory that is used to explain the process of learning a language is the so-called ‘information-processing model’ developed by Barry McLaughlin. McLaughlin’s theory is based on two basic ideas; first that complex behaviour builds on simple processes, and _____ (5) that learning a language is the same as any other type of human behaviour. Put simply, anything we do for the first time involves focus and concentration. The processing of new information demands care and attention. However, once we have done the thing a few times – and have received confirmation from others that we have been successful – we no longer need to focus specifically on what we do or say. In other words, it becomes _____ (6) Thus, something becomes ‘learnt’ when the information processing that takes place in the brain is automatic or unconscious – which is exactly what happens, according to McLaughlin, when we communicate with other people.

Answer Key

Gap Tests

Suggested answers. Synonyms to the suggestions can also be correct

Gap Test 4

- 1 suggest
- 2 speak
- 3 Compared
- 4 called
- 5 second
- 6 automatic