

Study: Grammar ability hardwired in humans

University of Rochester scientists studying why characteristics of grammar are found in all languages say the use of grammar is hardwired in our brains.

The study examined deaf individuals who were isolated from conventional sign, spoken and written language their entire lives, and yet still developed a unique form of gesture communication.

"Our findings suggest that certain fundamental characteristics of human language systems appear in gestural communication, even when the user has never been exposed to linguistic input and has not descended from previous generations of skilled communicative partners," said Elissa Newport, a professor of brain and cognitive sciences and linguistics

"We examined a particular hallmark of known grammatical systems and found these signers also used this same hallmark in their gestured sentences," said said. "They designed their own language and wound up with some of the same rules of grammar every other language uses."

The research was recently published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

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