

# Stages of First Language Learning



# Overview



- ◆ Conditions for learning
- ◆ Stages of first language learning



# Conditions for learning



- ◆ Speech production and comprehension
- ◆ Complex language
- ◆ Making associations

# Speech production and comprehension

- ◆ All healthy children learn to understand and produce language
- ◆ Speech production is not necessary for learning
- ◆ Comprehension is necessary for learning

# Complex language

- ◆ Children understand more language than they can produce
- ◆ All learners understand more words than they can produce

# Making associations 1

- ◆ Only hearing speech does not guarantee learning
- ◆ Children must be able to make an association between what they hear and the the meaning of the message

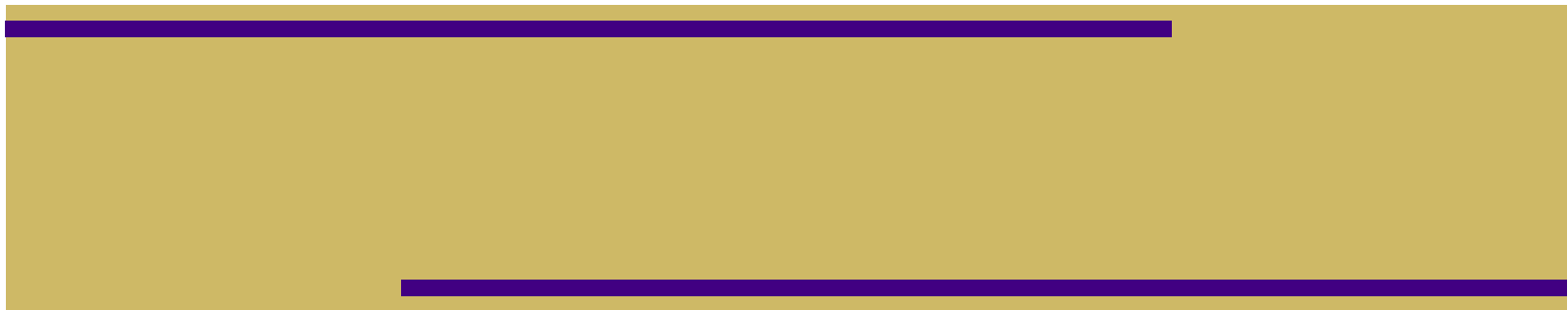
# Making associations 2

- ◆ Vocabulary: *hot*
  - A child doesn't learn the word just by hearing it, but must also experience heat
- ◆ Grammar: *Daddy's sleeping*
  - A child learns the present progressive by making an association between the action observed and the grammar used

# Stages of First Language Learning

- ◆ Pre-babbling
- ◆ Babbling
- ◆ Naming (One-word utterances)
- ◆ Telegraphic (Two- and three-word utterances)
- ◆ Transformational





# Pre-babbling: Before birth

- ◆ Babies pay attention to voices from three months before they are born
- ◆ Babies prefer their mother's voice to other voices
- ◆ Babies can understand their mother's feelings

# Pre-babbling: After birth

- ◆ Babies soon learn to recognize their mother's face and voice within 2 weeks from birth
- ◆ Babies listen to speech
- ◆ Babies learn that different sounds lead to certain behaviors by their mothers
  - Crying
  - Laughing



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# Pre-babbling: Purpose

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- ◆ Babies and mothers' behaviors help babies learn that sounds can communicate meaning



# Babbling 1



- ◆ Babies turn to you when you speak
- ◆ Listen to voices
- ◆ Make sounds that show pleasure or pain
- ◆ Cries have different meaning

# Babbling 2

- ◆ Babies begin to make word-like sounds around 4 to 6 months
- ◆ All babies make similar sounds
  - Cannot distinguish between a Japanese baby's babbling and an American baby's

# Babbling 3

- ◆ Sounds begin to sound like the baby's mother language at about 6 months
  - Sounds have some of the intonation and rhythm of the baby's mother language
  - Can distinguish between a Japanese baby's babbling and an American baby's
- ◆ Babbling is not associated with any meaning
  - *Mama* is a common sound, but in this stage it is made at any time



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# Purpose of babbling

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- ◆ Preparation for speech
- ◆ Opportunity to practice and play with sounds



# Naming (One-word utterances) 1

- ◆ Recognize names of familiar objects and people
  - Daddy, key, cookie, dog
- ◆ Responds to requests
  - Give it to me.

# Naming (One-word utterances) 2

- ◆ Babies say their first word at 12 months
  - First words not very clear
- ◆ Same sounds as babbling, but there is a clear association
  - *Mama* is used only when the baby's mother is present

# Features of naming stage

- ◆ Babies only use one-word utterances
- ◆ Babies mostly use words to name things
- ◆ One-word utterances can communicate more complex ideas
  - *Mama* could mean
    - *Come here mommy.*
    - *That's my mommy.*
    - *Where is mommy?*

# Telegraphic (2- and 3-word utterances)

- ◆ Starts when babies are about 2 years old
- ◆ Understands two part commands
  - Get your socks and put them in the basket.
- ◆ Understands contrasting meanings
  - Hot & cold
  - Stop & go
- ◆ Vocabulary exploding
  - A few words to 200 – 300 words

## 2- and 3-word utterances

<b>Child Utterances</b>	<b>Possible Meanings</b>	<b>Possible Purpose</b>
Want cookie.	I want a cookie.	Request
Joe see.	I (Joe) see you.	Informing
No sleep.	I don't want to go to sleep	Refusal
Where doll?	Where is the doll?	Question

# Features of 2- and 3-word utterances

- ◆ Variety of purposes
- ◆ Usually only contains content words
  - Words that express meaning
- ◆ Word order is grammatically correct

# Transformational stage

- ◆ Begins when children are 2.5 to 3 years old
- ◆ Utterances become more complex
- ◆ Begin to use morphemes
  - Prepositions: *in, on, for*, etc.
  - Plural endings: *a cat* vs. *three cats*
  - Verb endings: *I play* vs. *I played*

# Learning Morphemes

**TABLE 3.1**  
Grammatical morphemes acquired in early childhood.

Grammatical morpheme	Age (in months)	Example
Present progressive <i>-ing</i>	19–28	“Mommy eating”
Plural <i>-s</i>	27–30	“Baby shoes”
Preposition <i>in</i>	27–30	“Hat in box”
Preposition <i>on</i>	31–34	“Hat on chair”
Possessive <i>'s</i>	31–34	“Baby’s ball”
Regular past tense <i>-ed</i>	43–46	“Kitty jumped”
Irregular past tense	43–46	“We ate.”
Regular third person singular <i>-s</i>	43–46	“Mommy drives.”
Articles <i>a, the, an</i>	43–46	“The car”
Contractible copula <i>be</i>	43–46	“She’s happy.”
Contractible auxiliary	47–50	“She’s coming.”
Uncontractible copula <i>be</i>	47–50	“We were here”
Uncontractible auxiliary	47–50	“She was coming”
Irregular third person	47–50	“She did it.”

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# Morphemes 1

- ◆ Order cannot be explained by frequency
  - Expect the most common to be learned first
  - Most common not learned first

# Morphemes 2

- ◆ Referent
  - How easy is it to make a connection between the morpheme and the meaning?
- ◆ Sound change
  - How easy is it to hear the morpheme?

# Morphemes 3

- ◆ Morphemes that are easy to learn are
  - Easily connected to a meaning
  - Easy to hear
- ◆ Morphemes that are not easy to learn
  - Don't affect the meaning of the utterance
  - Aren't easy to hear

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  - Complex language
  - Making associations
- ◆ Stages of first language learning
  - Pre-babbling
  - Babbling
  - Naming (One-word utterances)
  - Telegraphic (Two- and three-word utterances)
  - Transformational