Language Acquisition
Part I

What Develops & When?

What is language?
- Creative

What is language?
- Creative
- Structured

The bee landed.
Bee the landed.
What is language?

- Creative
- Structured
- Referential

Shoes

What is language?

- Creative
- Structured
- Referential
- Interpersonal

What is language?

- Creative
- Structured
- Referential
- Interpersonal
- Species-Specific
  - Universal
Units of Language

- Phonemes
- Morphemes
- Semantics
- Syntax
- Pragmatics

Language Milestones

Outline

- Theories of language acquisition
- Prelinguistic communication
- Early word learning
- Grammar
Theories of Language Acquisition

- Learning Theory
- Nativist Theory
- Interactionist Theory

Learning Theory

- Product of the environment
  - Association
  - Selective Reinforcement
  - Imitation
    - abstract modeling

- Language is not special.
Nativist Theory

- Innate language learning mechanism.
- Chomsky’s LAD
  - Language Acquisition Device

Language acquisition can’t be explained by learning alone.

Film: Born to Talk

- Pinker
- Things to think about:
  - Nature vs nurture
  - Preview of children’s grammar
Interactionist Account

- “Bridge”
- Cognitive capacities and social environment interact.

Precursors to language

- Prefer mom’s voice
- Phonemic perception
- Distinguish native language
- Prefer “motherese”

Motherese

- High pitch
- Exaggerated
- Repetition
- Universal
Prelinguistic Communication

- Crying
- Cooing
  - 1-2 months
- Babbling
  - 6 months

Film: Talkin’ Babies

- Petito
- Things to think about
  - Babbling and language development
  - Auditory versus visual language
  - Nature and nurture

What’s so amazing about word learning?

- 1 year– 1 word
- 2 years– 300 words
- 3 years– 1000 words
- 4 years– 5000 words
- 5 years– 10000 words
- 18 years– 60000 words
Learning the first words

- Production: 10-12 months
- Comprehension: 8-10 months
- Variety!

Methodology

- Train infants on the names of 12 unfamiliar objects for 3 months.
- Test children’s comprehension & production weekly.
Testing
- Comprehension
- Production

Results
- Mean number of words correct
- Comprehension
- Production

Gesture
- Baby Signs
  - Acredolo & Goodwyn (1996)
  - 8 months!
Flower

Gesture

- Baby Signs
  - Acredolo & Goodwyn (1996)
  - 8 months!
  - Advantages:
    - Larger vocabulary
    - Increased communication
    - Decreased frustration

Common Early English Words

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Ball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cookie</td>
<td>Blocks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Car</td>
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<td>Dog</td>
<td>Clock</td>
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<td>Cat</td>
<td>Bottle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duck</td>
<td>Toast</td>
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Noun Advantage?

- Easier for children to learn nouns?
- Nouns are not as predominant in early Mandarin vocabularies

Effect of input