Language Acquisition
Part II

Outline

- Review
- More early word learning
- Development of syntax
- Critical periods

Review

- Theories of language learning
  - Learning theory
  - Nativist theory
  - Interactionist account
- Early word learning
In Class Assignment

- For each theory, give one piece of supporting evidence:
  - Learning Theory
  - Nativist Theory

- Describe the evidence and justify your answer.

Overextensions

- Using a word to refer to standard referents and others.
  - “Daddy”
  - Used for father, mailman, doctor, etc.

Underextensions

- Limiting the use of a word to a subset of the conventional referents.
  - “Cat”
  - Family cat, but not other cats
Extending nouns

- Nouns typically refer to a whole category of objects.
- How do children determine what objects should be named with the same label?
  - Texture?
  - Color?
  - Shape?

Methodology 1

Wug

Get me another wug.

Results

- Nouns refer to categories of same-shaped things.
- Is this bias specific to language?
Methodology 2

Exemplar

Get me one like this one.

Vocabulary Spurt (revisited)

Based on Nelson (1973)

Quine Dilemma

Rabbit
Constraints
- Whole-object principle
- Mutual-exclusivity principle

Review
- Early word learning
  - Errors
  - Extending labels
  - Constraints
Cognition and Language

- Down’s Syndrome
  - Restricted vocabulary
  - Simplistic grammar

- William’s Syndrome
  - Cognitive deficits
  - Fluent conversationalists

Film: William’s Syndrome

Things to think about:
- Cognitive deficits
- Language skills
- Nature & Nurture
Grammar
- Differentiates humans from apes
- Multi-word utterances
- Critical period

Understanding word order

Holophrases
- Single words can communicate whole ideas?

Cookie!
First word combinations

- 18 months
- Telegraphic
  - Mommy throw.
  - Daddy shoe.
  - See dog.

Critical periods in grammar

- Johnson & Newport (1989)
- Korean and Chinese immigrants learning English as second language.
- Variable:
  - Age of arrival

Johnson & Newport (1989)
Film: Genie

Things to think about:
- Genie’s language
- Critical periods in language learning
- Theoretical implications

In-Class Assignment

- Classify each of these abilities according to when they emerge...
  - 0-6 months
  - 6-12 months
  - 12-18 months
  - 18-24 months

- Says 1st word.
- Multi-word utterances (including function words).
- Distinguishes native language from foreign.
- Rapid acceleration in vocabulary size.
- Understands 1st word.