

Chapter Thirteen: L1 Acquisition

1. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD LANGUAGE LEARNING

Four important characteristics of this learning are:

- Typicality of language learning
- Similarity of language learning
- Spontaneity of language learning
- Creativity of language learning

2. MECHANISMS OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

2.1. Structured Input

Children are able to learn language because adults speak to them in a special simplified language sometimes called **motherese**. Motherese is characterized as:

- being spoken more slowly and clearly;
- using proper nouns instead of pronouns;
- having a structure that seems to assign an interactive role to the young child;
- using repetition and expansion
- etc.

2.2. Innateness Hypothesis

Logical problem of language acquisition → what accounts for the ease, rapidity, and uniformity of language acquisition in the face of impoverished data?

Poverty of stimulus → the language input exposed to the child is both quantitatively and qualitatively poor but still the child is able to produce, in a short period of time

Children are not given explicit information about the rules, by either instruction or correction. Observations of children acquiring languages reveal that the developmental stages are similar, possibly universal.
→ children are equipped with an innate template or blueprint for language: **innateness hypothesis**.

3. THE ACQUISITION SCHEDULE

3.1. Cooing

Usually the third month of life is called **cooing** period.

3.2. Babbling

By the age of six months, most children have entered into the **babbling** stage
the child produces a great variety of sounds
the child produces more complex syllable combinations (ma-ma, da-da, ga, ba)

3.3. One-word Stage

Between twelve and eighteen months most children begin to produce a variety of recognizable single-unit utterances which function as a phrase or sentence.

3.4. Two-word Stage

It begins around eighteen to twenty months

these utterances appear to be strings of two of the child's earlier holophrastic utterances
the child's vocabulary moves beyond fifty words

3.5. Telegraphic Stage

Utterances consist only of open-class or content words, and children are inconsistent in their use of function words.

- Instead of chronological order of language acquisition a more reliable measure called **mean length of utterance (MLU)** is used

4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRAMMAR

4.1. The Acquisition of Phonology

Manner of articulation: nasals, glides, stops, liquids, fricatives and affricates

Place of articulation: labials, velars, alveolars, and palatals

4.2. The Acquisition of Morphology

The first to appear is usually the *-ing* progressive morpheme → regular plurals → possessive inflection
→ regular past morpheme → *-s* marker on third person singular present

4.3. The Acquisition of Word Meaning

Overextension → the child overextends the meaning of a word on the basis of similarities of shape, sound, etc