

## Chapter Thirteen: L1 Acquisition

### 1. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD LANGUAGE LEARNING

important characteristics of this learning:

- 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**:

- 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

# begins around eighteen to twenty months

# 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

# prosodic bootstrapping → [The turtle][is eating][a pigeon]

### 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.

### 4.4. The Acquisition of Pragmatics

# context is needed to determine the reference of pronouns. Children, however, are not always sensitive to the needs of their interlocutors, e.g., *He hit me*

# younger children (around age two) have difficulty with the "shifting reference" of "I" and "you" pronouns

# children show a lack of pragmatic awareness by the way they sometimes use articles