FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

- **First language acquisition** refers to the acquisition of the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate and reason.

- **The study of language acquisition is fascinating, important and complicated.**
- - enormous interest in this process
- - enhancing our understanding of language as a whole / many applications
- - enormous difficulties encountered in the research

CONTENTS

- Language environment
- Stages of language acquisition
- Development of different aspects of language
- - Phonological development; morphological development; syntactic development; semantic development

LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

- Contact with a particular language
- - immersed in a language-rich environment

- Interactions with other language users
- - Language stimuli themselves are not sufficient.
- - The interactions with other language users (e.g. caregivers) are important.

CAREGIVER SPEECH

- **We do not interact with babies as we do with adults.**

- **Baby talk**
- **Caregiver/caretaker speech, infant-directed speech (IDS), child-directed speech (CDS)** or **motherese**
-
- **How do you speak to a very young child? (Characteristics of baby talk)**
-

CAREGIVER SPEECH

- mother: Look!
- child: (touches pictures)
- mother: What are those?
- child: (vocalizes a babble string and smiles)
- mother: Yes, there are rabbits.
- child: (vocalizes, smiles looks up at mother)
- mother: (laughs) Yes, rabbit.
- child: (vocalizes, smiles)
- mother: Yes. (laughs)

STAGES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- **Stage 1: around the birth**
- Language acquisition begins prior to birth and continues after birth.
- Newborns are sensitive to speech sounds.

STAGES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- **Stage 2: Cooing** (around 4-6 Months Old)
- Speech production: producing very basic, isolated vocalizations
- Speech perception: discriminating some basic vowels and syllables

STAGES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- **Stage 3: Babbling** (around 7-11 Months Old)
- Speech production
- - producing a number of different vowels and consonants
- - producing more syllables
- - producing chains of identical syllables (e.g. ba-ba-ba, du-du-du, ga-ga-ga)
- - producing chains of different syllables (e.g. ma-da-ga-ba)
- - Sounding that babies are speaking an 'alien language'.
- Speech perception
- - recognizing tones of voice

STAGES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- **Stage 4: The one-word stage** (around 12-18 Months Old)
- one-morpheme or one-unit stage or holophrastic stage

- **Children speak mainly in single words.**
- - naming objects (e.g., "milk," "cookie," "cat," "cup" and "spoon")
- - likely to refer to more complex situations (e.g., saying "milk" rather than "I want milk"; saying "daddy" while pointing dad's shoes)

STAGES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- **Stage 5: The two-word stage** (around 18-24 Months Old)
- **Two distinct words are used together.**
- - usually lacks function words
- - usually lacks inflectional morphemes
- - the two words could have a number of possible relations.
- e.g. Daddy car, hit ball, etc.
- - perception goes before production

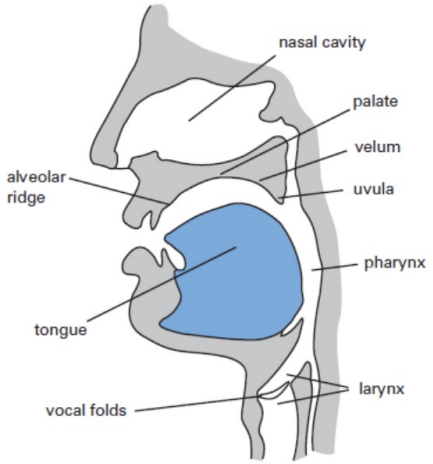
STAGES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- **Stage 6: Telegraphic speech**
- Usually function words and morphemes are missing (to, the, can, is,etc.).
- - this shoe all wet, cat drink milk and daddy go bye-bye

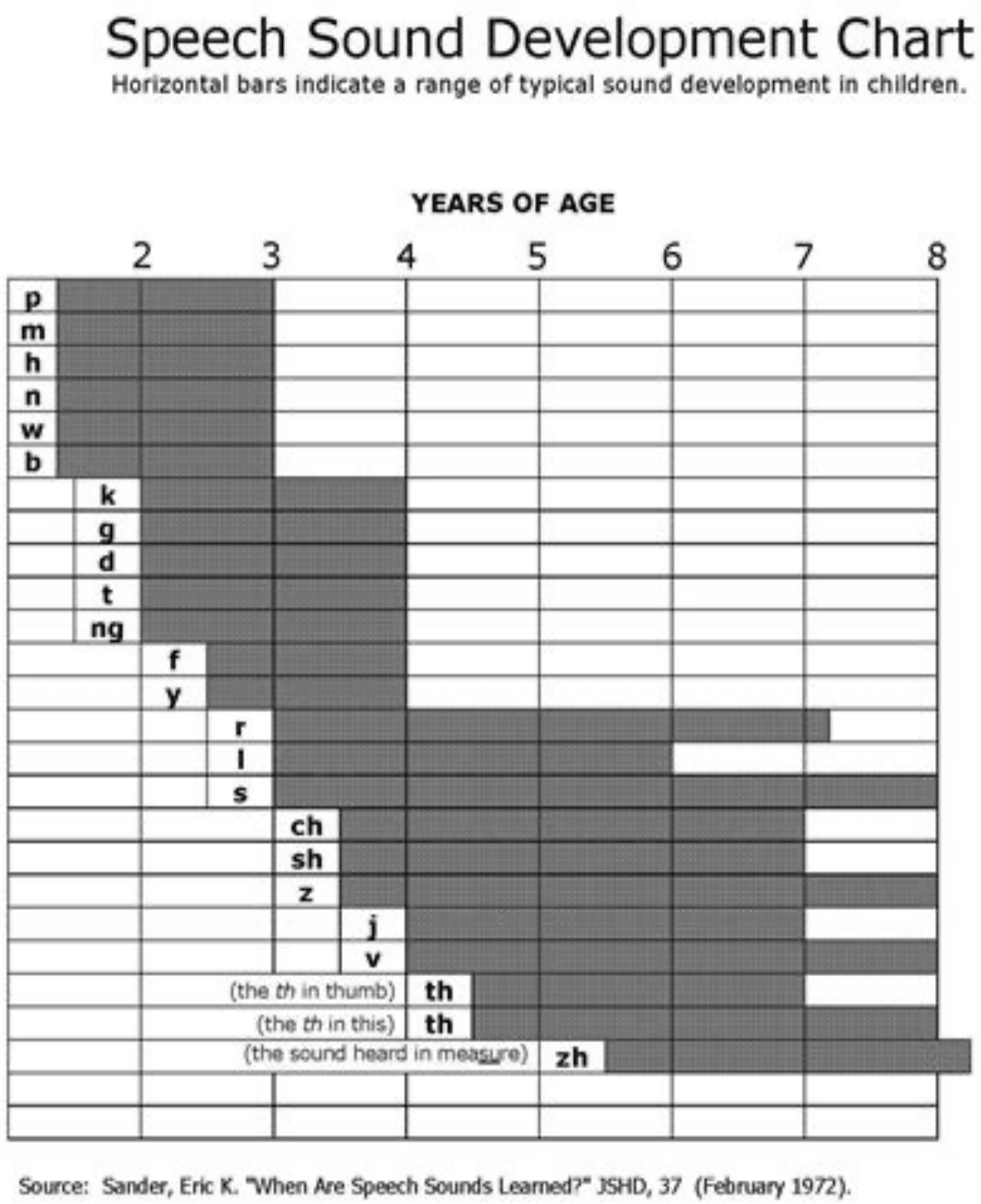
- Then,
- The child's vocabulary is expanding rapidly;
- Function words and inflectional morphemes begin to appear more regularly;
- Clearer in pronunciation and better in grammar;

PHONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

- General trend in the order in which children use consonants
- 1. Labials ([p], [b], [m])
- 2. Alveolars ([t], [d], [n], [s], [z],] [l], [r])
- 3. Velars ([k], [g], [ŋ])
- 4. Alveopalatals ([ʃ] [ʒ] [ʧ] [ʤ])
- 5. Dentals ([θ] [ð])



- Why this general trend?
-



PHONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

- **An interesting question**

- In some languages, two phones are allophones of the same phonemes (e.g., /t/ in *tar* and *star*; /i/ in *be* and *bean*);
- In some other languages, these same two phones are two different phonemes (e.g., Thai).

- Therefore, children have to learn whether two phones are allophones or two phonemes.

- How do children learn this?

MORPHOLOGICAL DEVELOPM

- The time some morphemes in English typically emerge
- **Why this order?**

Morphological acquisition is best outlined by Brown's Fourteen Grammatical Morphemes. The chart below details at what age each morpheme typically emerges.

Morpheme	**Example**	**Age of Mastery* (In Months)**
Present Progressive – *ing*	Mommy driv*ing*	19-28
In	Ball in cup	27-30
On	Doggie on sofa	27-33
Regular plural *-s*	Kitties eat my ice cream. Forms: /s/, /z/ and /iz/ Cats, Dogs, Classes, Wishes	27-33
Irregular past	Came, fell, broke, sat, went	25-46
Possessive 's	Mommy's balloon broke Forms: /s/, /s/ and /iz/ as in regular plural	26-40
Uncontractible copula (Verb *to be* as main verb)	He is. (Response to "Who is sick?)	28-46
Articles	I see *a* kitty.	28-46
Regular past *-ed*	Mommy pull*ed* the wagon Forms: /d/, /t/, /Id/ Pulled, Walked, Glided	26-48
Regular third person *-s*	Kathy hits Forms: /s/, /z/, and /iz/	28-50
Irregular third person	Does, has	28-50
Uncontractible auxiliary	He is. (Response to "Who is wearing your hat?")	29-48
Contractible copula	Man's big Man *is* big	29-49
Contractible auxiliary	Daddy's eating Daddy *is* eating	30-50

*Used correctly 90% of the time in obligatory contexts. Adapted from Bellugi & Brown

MORPHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Allomorphs: morphemes with different sounds or spellings but carrying the same meaning or serving the same grammatical function

- Regular plural form and irregular plural form
- Irregular past and regular past
- Regular third person and irregular third person

- The acquisition of these morphemes is often accompanied by a process of **overgeneralization.**
- Children will typically overgeneralize the regular rules of adding –s or –ed.
- - foots, mouses, sheeps, …
- - knowed, eated, gived, goed, bringed, …