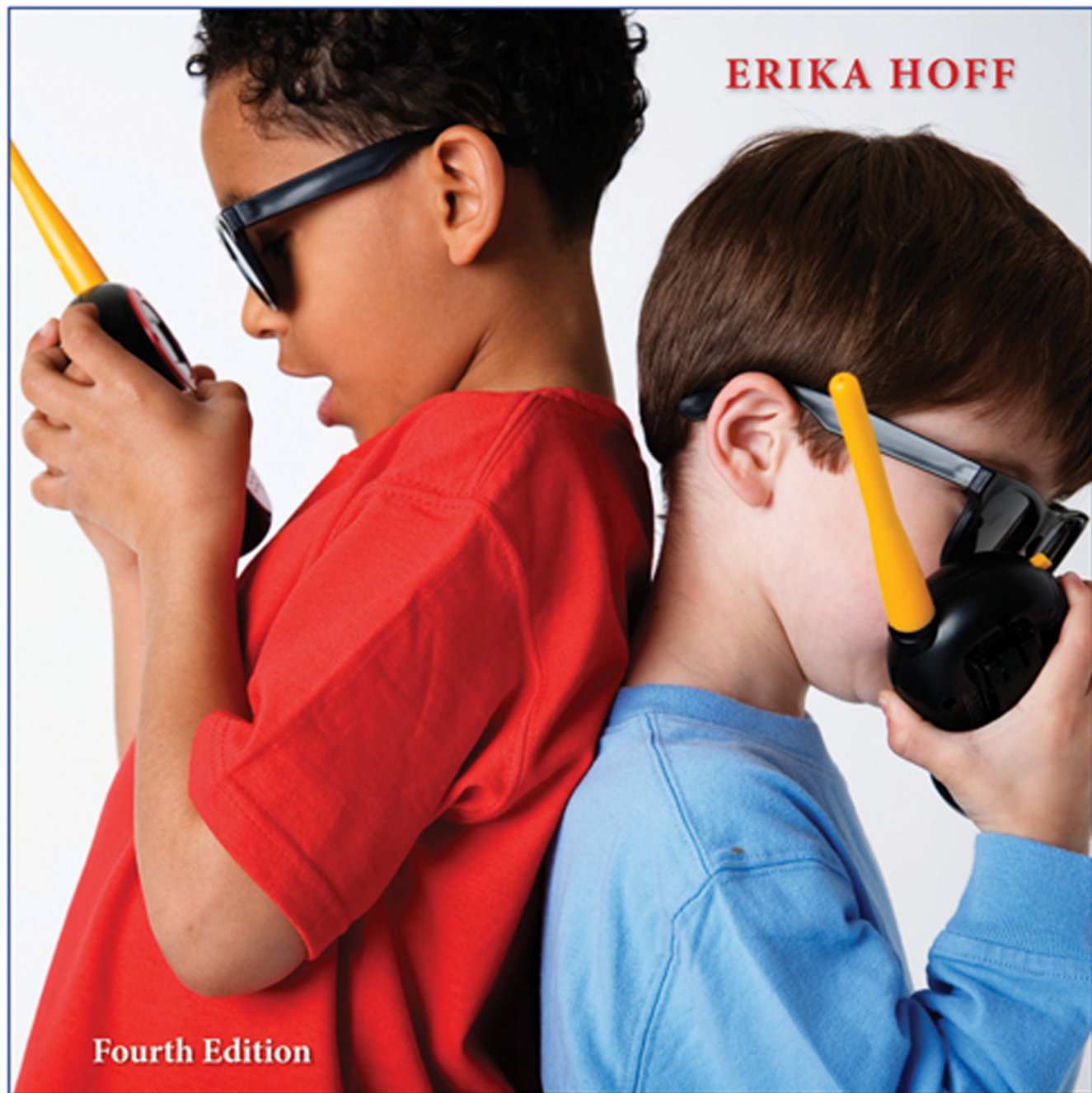


Language Development

ERIKA HOFF



Fourth Edition

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

FOURTH EDITION

Erika Hoff

Florida Atlantic University

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Language Development, Fourth Edition
Erika Hoff

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Art Director: Vernon Boes

Print Buyer: Judy Inouye

Permissions Editor: Mollika Basu

Production Service: Newgen–Austin

Photo Researcher: Sam Marshall

Copy Editor: Frances Andersen

Cover Designer: Denise Davidson

Cover Image: Sean Justice/Corbis

Compositor: Newgen

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2007941635

ISBN-13: 978-0-495-50171-8

ISBN-10: 0-495-50171-9

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PREFACE

To study language development is to consider the developing mind as it accomplishes one of its most astounding feats. I have tried, in this text, to introduce students to this field in a way that communicates both its content and its intellectual excitement. My aim in this book is to communicate the questions that are asked by researchers, the evidence that has been collected to address these questions, and the conclusions derived from this evidence that constitute our current state of knowledge. Understanding the questions is crucial, because if students do not understand the questions, they are not likely to be interested in the research findings that constitute the current answers. Also, in many areas of research, the questions are likely to outlive the tentative answers that the field can provide at this time. In discussing the theories that constitute the currently proposed answers, I have tried to present a balanced treatment that examines all sides of the arguments, even though this treatment is not strictly neutral.

My goal is to help students understand the different theoretical points of view in the field and the evidence and reasoning that lead some to argue for and others to argue—with equal vigor—against each point of view. I also believe it is important for students to understand the research process. In presenting the findings in each area, I have tried to summarize the results from a comprehensive review of the literature and to show students where findings come from by presenting selected, illustrative studies in greater methodological detail.

This book was written for advanced undergraduate students. It does not assume that the reader has a background in any particular discipline; therefore, it can be used in courses taught in departments of psychology, linguistics, education, and communicative disorders. The text should also be suitable for graduate courses—to be used as a background and framework for readings from primary sources. The instructor's manual provides an outline of the central concepts in each chapter, questions to promote student discussion, suggested supplementary student activities, and a test bank

of multiple-choice questions. Although this book does not assume any prior linguistic knowledge, it does not allow its readers to remain in that state. Some understanding of work in linguistics is necessary both to appreciate the magnitude of what every child accomplishes in acquiring language and to understand the research that asks how children manage this accomplishment. I have made every effort, however, not to intimidate the reader who is not linguistically inclined and to present the research in such a way that readers who miss the linguistic details can still appreciate the gist of what questions are being asked and why, and what conclusions the researchers are drawing.

The central focus of this text is language development as a field of basic research, but applied issues are also considered. Chapter 1 provides an overview and history of the field and introduces the major questions about language development and the theoretical approaches to seeking answers that recur throughout the text. Chapter 2 considers the biological bases of language development, covering a wide range of topics, including the process of creolization, studies of brain injury and aphasia, the hypothesis of a critical period for language acquisition, studies of neurological correlates of language processing in intact children and adults, the genetics of language development, “wild children,” the communication systems of other species, attempts to teach language to chimpanzees, and the evolution of the capacity for language in humans. Chapter 3 discusses the development of the child as a communicator, looking at both the prelinguistic communicative foundations of language and the development of communicative skill in using language. Chapters 4 through 6 cover phonological development, lexical development, and the development of syntax and morphology. Chapter 7 considers questions regarding the relation of culture, cognition, and language, including the effect of cultural practices on language development and the effect of language and language acquisition on cognition. Chapter 8 focuses on bilingual development, including discussion of bilingual education. Chapter 9 discusses the language developments that occur during the school years, including the acquisition of literacy. Chapter 10 examines language development in special populations. These populations include children who are deaf, children who are blind, children with mental retardation, children with autism, and children with specific language impairment.

NEW IN THE FOURTH EDITION

The fourth edition of *Language Development* represents a substantial revision of the previous edition. The revisions take into account reviewers' comments, direct feedback to me from users of the previous edition, and developments in the field of child language. There are more visuals in Chapter 1 along with a new section on theories, designed to be helpful to students who may not have a background in psychology. The chapter on communication, formerly Chapter 6, has been substantially revised, retitled, and moved to appear earlier in the book to reflect recent work that focuses on communication as the foundation of language development. There is a new section in this chapter on children's use of gesture to communicate. The sequence of chapters has been additionally revised so that bilingualism is treated earlier in the book. There is a more substantive treatment of literacy in bilingual children. There is a new chapter, Chapter 7, on language, culture, and

cognition. Some of the material in this chapter was moved from the chapters on lexical development and on communication. Most of the chapter is new, in order to represent this burgeoning area of research. Throughout the text, there is an increased representation of cross-linguistic work, and all chapters have been updated to reflect new theoretical and empirical work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a pleasure to publicly acknowledge those who contributed to this book's coming into being. I continue to owe a debt to Marilyn Shatz who first suggested, years ago, that I undertake such a project. I would like to thank Linda Jarmulowicz, Michael Maratsos, and many other colleagues who have used previous editions in their teaching and have provided feedback and encouragement. I am grateful to the students in my classes who have helped me figure out how to share this field and to the many students in my lab who have helped with the bibliographic work in preparing this fourth edition. I would also like to thank the many individuals at Cengage Learning who worked on producing this book, in particular the editors who have shepherded this edition to completion, Erik Evans and Michele Sordi, the technology project manager Lauren Keyes, and the production coordinator, Smitha Pillai.

This text is much better than it would have been otherwise because of the valuable comments provided by several reviewers. They are Elena Zaretsky, University of Massachusetts; Terrie Mathis, California State University at Northridge; Mandy Maguire, University of Texas at Dallas; Kiel Christianson, University of Illinois; Carla Hudson Kam, University of California–Berkeley; Liang Chen, University of Georgia; Fern Fellman, Bridgewater State College; and Betty Samraj, San Diego State University.

No child is safe from the pen and paper of an author looking for quotable examples of child language phenomena. Many of the quotations that are cited as personal data within the text come from my children, my nieces and nephews, and the children of friends, and I thank them for their forbearance. Some of these children who provided examples of early speech in earlier editions have also supplied examples of older children's speech in this edition. My own children, who were the primary source of examples in the first edition, are grown, and their speech errors are now the domain of a different field.

Erika Hoff

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GLOSSARY

Adaptation A characteristic that an organism possesses because the forces of natural selection operating during that organism's evolution made that particular characteristic advantageous. For example, long necks are adaptations that gave giraffes an advantage in reaching food and spotting predators. It has been proposed that the capacity for language is an adaptation that humans have because the ability to communicate gave humans a survival advantage.

Allophones Acoustically different speech sounds (phones) that are not functionally different (i.e., are the same phoneme) in a particular language. For example, [p] and [p^h] are allophones of the phoneme /p/ in English.

Alphabetic principle The association of letters with phonemes that characterizes English and other alphabetic writing systems.

Alphabetic systems Writing systems in which printed symbols correspond to phonemes. Examples

include English, Russian, and Korean.

American Sign Language (ASL) The manual language used by the deaf in the United States and the English-speaking provinces of Canada. It is not a system of pantomime; rather, it shares the same structural features as other natural languages.

Analogical reasoning Reasoning based on relational similarity.

Analytical approach An approach to language acquisition that is more characteristic of some children than of others. It involves breaking down the speech stream into its component parts (words and—within words—phonemes) and figuring out the system for productively combining these component parts. *See also* Holistic approach.

Aphasia Any of a range of language disorders caused by brain damage.

Articulatory phonetics The system of describing speech sounds in terms of how they are produced.

Autism A disorder, with an onset before the age of 30 months, that involves severe social and communicative impairment and may or may not be accompanied by mental retardation.

Autobiographical memory Memory of one's own experiences.

Babbling drift The notion that the sounds in infants' babbling are influenced by the ambient language. Their babbling "drifts in the direction of the speech the infant hears" (R. Brown, 1958a, p. 199).

Behaviorism The theoretical perspective that seeks to explain behavior in terms of factors external to the mind. *See also* Cognitivism.

Bilingual education Education in which the curriculum is taught in two languages.

Bound morpheme A morpheme that cannot stand alone, but rather is attached to a word stem (such as *-ed* to indicate past tense; *-s* to indicate plural). *See also* Free morpheme.

Brain-imaging technique Any of several techniques that show the relative levels of activity of different parts of the brain during performance of a particular task. Positron emission tomography (PET) scans, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), and optical topography are examples.

Broca's aphasia The condition in which the ability to produce speech is severely impaired because of brain damage.

Broca's area An area in the front portion of the left temporal lobe of the brain that is involved in language functioning.

Canonical babbling A reduplicated series of the same consonant–vowel combination in clear syllables (such as *da-da*). *See also* Reduplicated babbling.

Canonical form A whole-word sound pattern that young children sometimes use as a basis for pronouncing new words.

Categorical perception The perception of stimuli that vary along a physical continuum as belonging to discrete categories. *See also* Phoneme boundary effect.

Cerebral cortex The outer layer of the brain that controls higher mental functions such as reasoning and planning.

Chatterbox syndrome A disorder characterized by severe mental retardation but remarkable linguistic abilities.

Child-directed speech The speech that adults and older children address to younger children. It has certain typical characteristics that distinguish it from adult-directed speech. Also referred to as infant-directed speech and motherese.

CHILDES Child Language Data Exchange System. A computer program for the analysis of tran-

scripts, and an archive of previously collected transcripts of children's speech.

Closed-class word A word from categories such as determiners (e.g., *a, the*), auxiliaries (e.g., *can, would*), and prepositions (e.g., *on, over*). These categories share the characteristics that they serve grammatical functions (e.g., determiners mark the beginnings of noun phrases) and that speakers cannot readily invent new words to add to these categories—in contrast to categories such as noun and verb that readily admit newly coined words. *See also* Functional categories; Open-class word.

Cochlear implant A device surgically implanted in the cochlea that allows a deaf individual to perceive sound by enabling sound to bypass damaged cells in the ear and directly stimulate the auditory nerve. Sound is picked up by an external microphone worn behind the ear, processed, and converted into electrical impulses, which are transmitted to an electrode array implanted in the cochlea.

Code switching Changing from one type of language use to another, such as switching from a formal to an informal register when talking to people who differ in status. The term is also used to describe the switching between two languages that is characteristic of bilingual language use.

Cognitive science An interdisciplinary field including psychology, linguistics, philosophy, computer science, and neuroscience devoted to understanding how the mind works.

Cognitivism The theoretical perspective that seeks to explain behavior in terms of processes that occur inside the mind. *See also* Behaviorism.

Coherence The property of a story that pertains to how the events of the story are related to each other. In a coherent story, the events in sequence are related to each other in a meaningful way.

Cohesion The property of a story that pertains to how the sentences of the story are linked together. In a cohesive story, linguistic devices, for example, pronominal reference, link sentences to each other.

Collective monologue A type of pseudoconversation engaged in by preschool children. The children take turns speaking, but each speaker's contribution to the conversation has little to do with the content of what other speakers are saying.

Combinatorial speech Speech in which words are combined in utterances (in contrast to single-word utterances).

Complex sentence A sentence that contains more than one clause.

Compounding The creation of a single new word by combining two existing words (such as *birdhouse*).

Comprehension monitoring The evaluation of one's own understanding. Young children seem to accept and act on inadequate messages in part because they don't realize that they don't understand.

Computational modeling A method of testing hypotheses about how a process, such as language acquisition, works by implementing a model of that process in a computer program and asking whether the computer can mimic the process that is being modeled.

Connected discourse Stretches of speech or writing longer than a single sentence, including conversations and narratives.

Connectionism A theoretical perspective that holds that thinking consists of activating connections

in a network of interconnected nodes and of activation spreading in this network along paths determined by the strengths of the connections among those nodes.

Connectionist model A type of model of how a phenomenon, such as some aspect of language acquisition, could be accomplished by a device that consists of a network of interconnected nodes. Typically, such models are implemented as computer programs, and the ability of the computer program to mimic human language development is taken as evidence of the plausibility of a connectionist account of language acquisition. *See also* Connectionism.

Constructivism A view of development that holds that language (or any form of knowledge) is constructed by the child using inborn mental equipment that operates over information provided by the environment.

Context-bound word use Word use that is tied to particular contexts.

Contextualized language use Language use in which the nonlinguistic context supports interpretation of the language; speech about the here and now.

Continuity assumption The theoretical position that it should be assumed children have the same kind of grammar adults do unless the evidence proves otherwise.

Contralateral connections A feature of the human nervous system in which the primary connections from the brain to the body extend from each hemisphere of the brain to the opposite side of the body. *See also* Ipsilateral connections.

Conversation A stretch of talk that involves two or more people.

Cooing Vowel-like sounds that babies produce when they appear to be happy and contented.

Corpus callosum A band of nerve fibers that connects the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

Creole A language that develops when children acquire a pidgin language as their native language and which is grammatically more complex than a pidgin language.

Critical period hypothesis The theory that there is a biologically determined period during which language acquisition must occur.

Decontextualized language use Language use in which the words stand on their own without support from the nonlinguistic context.

Derivational morphology The process that creates new words by adding certain suffixes or prefixes (derivational morphemes) to existing words (such as dance + *er* = dancer; sad + *ness* = sadness).

Descent with modification The principle of evolution according to which current characteristics of species came into being through the gradual modification of earlier characteristics.

Descriptive rules Rules that describe speakers' linguistic knowledge (in contrast to prescriptive rules).

Developmental approach The approach to research on language development that attempts to answer the question, "What is the course of language development, and how can we explain it?" *See also* Learnability approach.

Developmental dyslexia The condition in which a child's reading ability is lower than would be expected on the basis of his or her IQ.

Developmental dysphasia A delay in language development in the absence of any clear sensory or cognitive disorder; also referred to as specific language impairment.

Dichotic listening task An experimental procedure in which two auditory stimuli are presented simultaneously (one to each ear). The purpose is to infer which cerebral hemisphere is responsible for processing the stimuli on the basis of which stimulus the listener perceives.

Dishabituation Renewed interest in a stimulus. *See also* Habituation.

Dissociability (of language and cognition) The independence of one function from the other, which would imply that each function relies on a separate underlying mental capacity.

Distinctive feature A phonetic feature (such as voicing) that creates a phonemic distinction between two speech sounds. *See also* Phonemes.

Domain-general capacities Mental capacities or abilities that are used for many different tasks and domains. For example, if the ability to detect patterns in input is used for acquiring language and for learning about the physical properties of the world, then pattern detection would be a domain-general capacity.

Domain-specific capacities Mental capacities or abilities that are useful for only one task or domain. For example, if the mental capacity responsible for language acquisition were used only to acquire language and nothing else, it would be a domain-specific capacity.

Dominant language switch hypothesis The hypothesis that children tend to learn a second language more completely than adults do because children, more than adults, tend to switch to the second language as their dominant language and use it more.

Down syndrome A chromosomal abnormality that causes moderate

to severe mental retardation and typically affects language development.

Dynamical systems theory An approach to studying complex systems that focuses on self-organizing processes of such systems and assumes that novel behaviors emerge from the interaction of components of the system and the environment.

Echolalic speech Speech that merely repeats part of what the previous speaker said. Producing echolalic speech is a characteristic of individuals with autism.

Egocentrism A characteristic of preschool children, according to the developmental theory of Jean Piaget, that makes them unable to consider what a situation is like from the point of view of another person.

Emergent literacy Skills and knowledge about literacy that children acquire before they learn to read, such as knowing how to hold a book and turn the pages, knowing that words and stories are contained in the print on the page, and knowing that the print on signs and labels contains information.

Emergentism The view that new knowledge can arise from the interaction of biologically based learning processes and input from the environment. It differs from constructivism in its explicit claim that what emerges from the process of innate structure operating on environmental input can be more than was provided in either the innate structure or the input.

Empiricism A view of development that asserts that the mind at birth is a blank slate and all knowledge and reason come from experience.

Equipotentiality hypothesis The hypothesis that, at birth, both hemispheres of the brain have equal potential for acquiring language.

Event-related brain potential (ERP) A measure of brain activity. Electrodes placed on the scalp record voltage fluctuations in the brain as the individual perceives or responds to presented stimuli. These voltage fluctuations are electrical potentials associated with the experimenter-controlled events, and the location of the potentials is taken as evidence of where in the brain the processing of that event occurred.

Evolutionary psychology The approach to the study of human mental functioning that attempts to understand human cognitive abilities by considering their adaptive function and evolutionary history.

Expansion stage A stage of pre-speech phonological development immediately prior to the emergence of babbling. Infants at this stage, typically between 16 and 30 weeks, produce a variety of speech sounds but no true syllabic babbling.

Expressive language style A style of vocabulary development in which early lexicons contain relatively fewer object labels and relatively more words that serve social functions than do the early lexicons of children with a referential language style. *See also* Referential language style.

Extended optional infinitive hypothesis The notion that all children go through a stage in which verbs are produced without inflection, that is, they optionally appear in their infinite form without the endings that mark person, tense, and aspect, and that in children with specific language impairment, this stage lasts longer than normal.

False belief (understanding) The understanding that other people can hold beliefs that contradict reality and that they will act on those beliefs. False-belief understanding is

an important component of theory of mind understandings.

Familial concentration The rate of occurrence of a particular characteristic (such as specific language impairment) within a family. High familial concentration suggests a genetic basis.

Family literacy Literacy practices that occur in the home, including reading labels, newspapers, magazines, and books and writing lists, notes, and letters.

Fast mapping The process children engage in when they hypothesize a meaning for a newly heard word on the basis of hearing the word once or at most a few times.

Formalism The view that the structure of language is arbitrary and cannot be explained in terms of the meanings language conveys or the communicative functions language serves.

Free morpheme A morpheme that stands alone as a word. *See also* Bound morpheme.

Fricative A category of consonants produced by partially obstructing the flow of air; for example, [f] and [s].

Functional architecture (of the brain) How the brain is organized to serve the functions it performs.

Functional asymmetry The characteristic of the human brain in which each hemisphere serves different functions.

Functional categories The term used in Chomsky's Government and Binding Theory to refer to words such as auxiliaries, prepositions, and determiners (articles) that do not carry thematic content but rather serve primarily grammatical functions. *See also* Closed-class word; Lexical categories.

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) A noninvasive

method of discovering which areas of the brain are active during task performance by measuring blood flow as an indicator of neuronal activity.

Functionalism The theory that the structure of language has a basis in the communicative functions language serves.

Gender systems Linguistic systems in which nouns belong to one of two or more categories that take different forms of articles and grammatical morphemes.

Grammatical morphemes Words and word endings that mark grammatical relations, such as articles, prepositions, auxiliary verbs, and noun and verb endings.

Grammatical morphology The structure of words that results from combining word roots with endings that mark grammatical relations, such as the *-s* at the end of verbs to mark agreement with a third-person subject (“he runs”) or the *-ed* at the end of verbs to mark the past tense. Grammatical morphology is also known as inflectional morphology.

Habituation Apparent loss of interest in a repeatedly presented stimulus.

Head-turn technique An experimental procedure used to test when infants perceive two sounds as different; the technique relies on conditioning the infant to produce a head turn when a repeatedly presented sound changes. Typically used with infants 5 months of age and older.

High-amplitude sucking (HAS) technique An experimental procedure used to test when infants perceive two sounds as different; the technique relies on the infant’s first habituating to one sound and then showing dishabituation when a new sound is presented.

Typically used with infants under 5 months old.

Holistic approach An approach to language acquisition that is more characteristic of some children than of others. It consists of memorizing large, unanalyzed chunks of speech. *See also* Analytical approach.

Home sign Gestural communication systems that deaf children typically invent to communicate if they are not exposed to a sign language.

Immersion program A program that teaches children a second language by providing not only language instruction but also regular classes in that second language. It is a form of bilingual education.

Infant-directed speech *See* Motherese.

Inflectional morphology *See* Grammatical morphology.

Instrumental motivation Interest in learning a second language for utilitarian purposes such as job advancement.

Integrative motivation Interest in learning a second language for the purpose of associating with members of the culture in which that language is spoken.

Intentionality The characteristic of having a purpose or goal (in speaking).

Interactionism A view of development that, although acknowledging there must be some innate characteristics of the mind that allow for language development, places greater emphasis on the nature of the language-learning environment of the child.

Invariance hypothesis The theory that holds that the left hemisphere of the brain has the adult specialization for language from birth.

Ipsilateral connections The nervous system connections between

each hemisphere of the brain and the same side of the body. The primary connections in the nervous system are contralateral. *See also* Contralateral connections.

Jargon Sequences of variegated babbling that have the intonation contour of sentences.

Joint attention The state in which two people, for example, the child and a conversational partner, are attending to the same object or event. This skill at coordinating attention with others is related to language development.

Language Acquisition Device (LAD) A term coined by Noam Chomsky to refer to the mental faculty that underlies the human ability to acquire language.

Language bioprogram hypothesis The hypothesis proposed by Bickerton that humans possess a biologically based, innate linguistic capacity that includes a skeletal grammar. By hypothesis, this capacity underlies both children’s language acquisition and the process of creolization and accounts for similarities between child language and creoles.

Language differentiation The task faced by children growing up exposed to two (or more) languages to figure out that they are hearing two different languages rather than one language that is some combination of both.

Language input The speech children hear. (It is the “input” to the Language Acquisition Device.)

Language play Activities such as rhyming, using alliteration, and making puns that manipulate the sound of language.

Language socialization The process by which children learn the socially appropriate use of language in their communities and the process by

which language socializes children to adopt the attitudes and behaviors of their communities.

Language transfer Influences of the native language on second language learning.

Learnability approach The question of whether language, or some aspect of language, could, in fact, be learned by children. If language is not learnable, then it must be innate. The learnability approach to the study of language acquisition focuses on explaining how language could be learned, in contrast to the developmental approach, which focuses on explaining the course of language development. *See also* Developmental approach.

Lesion method The method of investigating the functions performed by different areas of the brain by correlating impaired function with the location of damage to the brain.

“Less is more” hypothesis The hypothesis (proposed by Newport) that children’s smaller short-term memory span (compared with that of adults) facilitates language acquisition by giving children smaller chunks of language to analyze.

Lexical categories The term in Chomsky’s Government and Binding Theory for categories of words (such as Noun and Verb) that carry thematic content. *See also* Functional categories; Open-class word.

Lexical constraints *See* Lexical principles.

Lexical organization The way in which the mental lexicon represents the relation between words and meanings.

Lexical principles The assumptions about how the lexicon works that are attributed to the child in order to explain how word learning is so successful and rapid. Lexical

principles guide the child in mapping new words to meaning by constraining the possible interpretations of new words that children must consider. The whole-object assumption and mutual exclusivity are two examples.

Lexical selection The phenomenon in which children’s early vocabularies are restricted to words that use only those sounds that the child can produce.

Lexicon The dictionary of words and associated knowledge that speakers have.

Linguistic determinism The hypothesis that language determines thought, with the corollary that speakers of different languages may, as result, think differently. Also known as the Whorfian hypothesis.

Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts An index to articles on language and language-related fields in 1500 journals.

Literacy The ability to read and write.

Manner of articulation How the airflow is obstructed as a consonant is produced.

Mapping problem The logical problem of learning word meanings that arises because an infinite number of hypotheses about word meaning may be consistent with information in the nonlinguistic context of use.

Marginal babbling The sound series that infants produce just before they begin to produce canonical babbling. This kind of sound production is typical around 5 and 6 months of age.

Matthew effect The effect of early reading skill on later reading skill in which early good readers improve faster than early poor readers with the result that the gap between

skilled and poor readers grows. (Named after the biblical passage according to which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer.)

Mean length of utterance (MLU) A common measure of grammatical development. It is the average length of the utterances in a sample of spontaneous speech, usually counted in terms of the number of morphemes.

Mental lexicon The knowledge of words that speakers of a language possess; the dictionary in the head.

Mental state language Language that refers to mental states such as words like *think*, *want*, *know*.

Mentalese The language of thought. This term is used to express the view that human thought processes make use of a language-like medium that is not any spoken language.

Metalinguistic awareness The conscious awareness of how language works.

Modularity thesis The cognitive theory that holds that the ability to develop language is a self-contained module in the mind, separate from other aspects of mental functioning.

Morpheme The smallest element in a language that carries meaning. Free morphemes are words; bound morphemes are prefixes, suffixes, and, in some languages, infixes. *See also* Word.

Morphology A system of rules for combining the smallest units of language into words.

Motherese The kind of speech that mothers (and others) produce when talking to infants and young children. It is characterized by an average higher pitch, a wider pitch range, longer pauses, and shorter phrases than speech addressed to adults. Also referred to as

child-directed speech or infant-directed speech.

Mutual-exclusivity assumption A word-learning constraint according to which children assume that objects can have only a single name.

Narrative A verbal description of past events that is longer than a single utterance.

Nativism The view that knowledge is innate, as opposed to being learned from experience.

Natural partitions hypothesis The notion that the world makes obvious the things that take nouns as labels, that is, that the meanings that nouns encode are natural chunks of meaning. That makes the task of learning nouns one in which the child must simply find the label—the meaning is provided outside of language. *Compare* Relational relativity hypothesis.

Nature versus nurture Two contrasting views of the determinants of development. According to the nature view, development is biologically determined. According to the nurture view, development is shaped by experience.

Near-infrared spectroscopy (NIRS) A method of brain imaging, also known as optical topography, that measures activity in different regions of the brain by using the degree to which light passes between points on the scalp as an indicator of blood oxygenation and thus neural activity.

Negative evidence Evidence that a sentence is ungrammatical—in contrast to positive evidence that a sentence is grammatical. All the sentences that children hear are positive evidence of possible constructions in the language. Negative evidence would be feedback or correction when the child produces an ungrammatical sentence. The

availability of negative evidence in children's input is a matter of some controversy.

Neural circuit Interconnected neurons that fire together when presented with a particular stimulus or when accomplishing a particular task.

Neurolinguistics The study of the brain and language.

Neuron Nerve cell.

Nominal A word that labels things; a common noun.

Nonreduplicated babbling Type of babbling that contains sequences of different syllables—as opposed to repetition of the same syllable over and over, as in reduplicated babbling.

Open-class word A word from the categories of noun, verb, adjective, adverb; labeled open class because new nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs can readily be coined and added to the language. *See also* Closed-class word.

Optical topography *See* Near-infrared spectroscopy (NIRS).

Oral language development The development of spoken, as opposed to gestural or written, language.

Oralist method An approach to language education for the deaf that focuses on the development of the ability to produce speech and read lips.

Otitis media Infection of the middle ear. This is frequently associated with fluid buildup in the middle ear (otitis media with effusion), resulting in temporary hearing impairment.

Overextension A type of error in children's early word usage that seems to reflect an overly inclusive meaning in the mind of the child (such as referring to all four-legged animals as “doggie”). *See also* Underextension.

Overgeneralization An overly general rule that children might infer from the speech they hear.

Overregularization An overapplication of rules to irregular parts of the language (such as pluralizing *foot* as *foots*).

Phone A speech sound, such as [p], [p^h], and [b], used by any language.

Phoneme boundary The location on a continuum of change in some acoustic property of a sound where the listener's perception of the sound changes from one phoneme to another. *See also* Phoneme boundary effect.

Phoneme boundary effect The phenomenon in which the same acoustic difference (such as a 20-millisecond difference in voice onset time [VOT]) is perceptible if the two stimuli are on opposite sides of a phoneme boundary (as in /b/ versus /p/) but is imperceptible if the two stimuli are within the range of variation perceived as one phoneme. *See also* Categorical perception.

Phonemes Speech sounds that signal a difference in meaning in a particular language.

Phonemic awareness The awareness of phonemes as units of words—a component of phonological awareness.

Phonetic feature A characteristic of the way speech sounds are produced that is used to describe differences and similarities among speech sounds. For example, [b] and [p] differ in the feature of voicing.

Phonics The method of reading instruction that involves explicit teaching of letter–sound correspondences.

Phonological awareness Conscious awareness of the phonological properties of language, such as the ability to count the number of syllables in a word and to identify rhymes.

Phonological bootstrapping hypothesis The hypothesis that language-learning children find and use clues to the syntactic structure of language in phonological properties of the speech they hear. *See also* Prosodic bootstrapping hypothesis.

Phonological idiom A word that children pronounce in a very adult-like manner while still incorrectly producing other words that use the same sounds.

Phonological knowledge Knowledge of the sounds and sound patterns of a language.

Phonological memory The function of short-term memory responsible for the temporary storage of the sound of a speech stimulus.

Phonological processes Rules that map sounds in the target language to sounds in young children's limited production repertoires. Phonological processes that are common to many children give young children's speech typical features, such as pronouncing *r* as *w*.

Phonological recoding The process of mentally going through the sound of the word to get from the printed word to the word's meaning.

Phonology The sound system of a language.

Phonotactic knowledge Knowledge of the probability of sound sequences in a language. For example, in English /z/ is rare, /t/ is frequent, and /kp/ is not allowed.

Pidgin A structurally simple language that arises when people who share no common language come into contact.

Place of articulation The location where the airflow is obstructed as a consonant is produced.

Plasticity The ability of parts of the brain to take over functions they normally would not serve. There

is much more plasticity in the child's brain than in the adult's.

Pragmatic bootstrapping The hypothesis that when children start speaking, they produce utterances in order to accomplish goals. This pragmatically based system gets children started in using language and is later replaced by a system with word meanings and grammatical structure.

Pragmatic development The development of the communicative functions or uses of language.

Pragmatic principle A principle about how words are used that, by hypothesis, helps children figure out the meaning of newly encountered words.

Pragmatics The communicative functions or uses of language.

Prelingually deaf The characteristic of having become deaf prior to acquiring language.

Prescriptive rules Rules of grammar that define how language should be used, as taught in writing classes and specified in style manuals. For example, the rules that prohibit splitting infinitives and ending sentences with prepositions are prescriptive rules. *See also* Descriptive rules.

Principle of contrast A pragmatic principle that, by hypothesis, leads children to assume that different words have different meanings.

Principle of conventionality A pragmatic principle that, by hypothesis, leads children to assume that words are used by all speakers to express the same meaning—that is, that word meaning is a convention.

Principles and parameters theory The theory that the child has innate knowledge of Universal Grammar, consisting of principles that hold true for every language, and a set of options, or parameters, that have to be filled in by experience.

Private speech Speech produced for one's self (as opposed to for another listener).

Productivity or generativity of language The characteristic of all human languages such that they make use of a finite repertoire of sounds to produce a potentially infinite number of sentences.

Prosodic bootstrapping hypothesis The hypothesis that language-learning children find and use clues to syntactic structure of language in the prosodic characteristics of the speech they hear. *See also* Phonological bootstrapping hypothesis.

Prosody The intonation contour of speech, including pauses and changes in stress and pitch.

Protoword An idiosyncratic sound sequence that children use with consistent meaning but which is not clearly derived from a word in the target language.

PsycINFO An online index to a large number of journals, books, and book chapters in psychology and related fields.

Reduplicated babbling Babbling that consists of repeating the same syllable over and over (such as *da-da-da-da*). This is characteristic of infant sound production around 8 to 10 months of age. *See also* Canonical babbling.

Reference The notion of words as symbols that stand for their referents.

Referential communication A communication task in which the speaker must indicate to a listener which item to select out of an array of items.

Referential language style A style of vocabulary development in which a child's early lexicon is heavily dominated by object labels. *See also* Expressive language style.

Referential words Words whose use is not bound to one particular context.

Register The style of language use associated with a particular social setting.

Relational meaning The relation between the referents of the words in a word combination (e.g., possession is indicated by “Daddy’s shirt”).

Relational relativity hypothesis The notion that verb meanings do not naturally emerge from the structure of the world. This leaves open the possibility that verb meanings will vary from language to language, and thus children will have to figure out verb meanings from hearing the verb in use. *Compare* Natural partitions hypothesis.

Response strategy Children’s method of falling back on ways of responding that do not depend on understanding; used when they do not fully understand what is said to them. For example, 1-year-old children appear to have a strategy of responding to whatever is said to them by doing something. This has been termed an action strategy.

Right-ear advantage The relatively greater probability that stimuli presented to the right ear in a dichotic listening test will be perceived by the listener. Typically, there is a right-ear advantage for linguistic stimuli, which suggests that the left cerebral hemisphere is primarily responsible for processing linguistic stimuli.

Rule learning The learning of relationships among abstract entities for which different items may be substituted, such as learning the pattern x y x , where any item can be substituted for x and for y . In contrast, statistical learning is learning patterns among the items actually experienced, as opposed to patterns among abstract variables.

Scaffolding A term used to describe the support for children’s language use that more competent speakers sometimes provide. Examples of scaffolding include routinized formats for interaction and leading questions that adults ask, both of which enable children to perform at a more advanced level than they could on their own.

Semantic bootstrapping The theory that the correspondence between semantic and syntactic categories provides the language-learning child entry into the grammatical system.

Semantic organization The organization of meanings as expressed in a language, as distinct from cognitive organization.

Semantically based grammar A grammar in which rules operate over meaning-based categories such as agent, action, location, and so on.

Sensitive period A term sometimes used instead of critical period to indicate that the ability to acquire language may be greatest during a particular period of development but that later language acquisition is not impossible.

Sequential bilingualism Bilingualism that results from a person’s learning a second language after acquisition of the first language is well under way.

Sign language A type of language, used primarily by the deaf, that makes use of manual gestures, facial expressions, and body posture. Sign languages are complete, complex languages that share many linguistic and neurological features with spoken languages.

Simultaneous bilingualism Bilingualism that results from a person’s being exposed from birth or shortly after birth to two languages.

Social interactionism A view of development that holds that a crucial

aspect of language-learning experience is social interaction with another person.

Social/cognitive view The view that the starting point of language acquisition is provided by general cognition, as are the mechanisms of language development. The requisite experience for language acquisition is social interaction with other speakers.

Sociolinguistic development Development as a socially competent language user.

Sociolinguistic knowledge The knowledge of how language use varies as a function of speaker status, sex, setting, and other social variables.

Sociolinguistics The study of how language use varies as a function of sociological variables such as status, culture, and gender.

Specific language impairment (SLI) Language impairment in the absence of any cognitive, social, or sensory condition that would cause language impairment.

Speech act Utterance as behavior; the notion that talking is “doing things with words.”

Speech sample A video-recorded or audio-recorded record of spontaneous speech used to assess children’s language development.

Speech segmentation The mental process of separating the speech stream into separate words.

Split-brain patient A patient who has had his or her corpus callosum severed (usually to relieve epileptic seizures).

Statistical learning Learning of the co-occurrence probabilities of experienced stimuli. For example, babies presented with sequences of sounds appear to learn the conditional probability of one sound

following another in the sequence they heard. This is one mechanism for learning the patterns in input that could contribute to learning language. *Compare* Rule learning.

Stop A consonant sound that is produced by completely closing the vocal tract at some point and then releasing the air to pass through the vocal tract, as in [p] and [k].

Story grammar The structure all stories follow. There are different proposals for what this structure is, and this structure varies as a function of culture. For example, Western stories tend to consist of a setting plus one or more episodes. The setting includes the place and the characters; each episode includes an initiating event, a problem or obstacle, and a resolution of the problem.

Subcortical structure A structure of the brain beneath the cerebral cortex that controls primitive functions as opposed to higher mental processes.

Supralaryngeal vocal tract The vocal tract located above the larynx that is responsible for the production of speech sounds.

Syntactic bootstrapping hypothesis The hypothesis that children find and use clues to the meaning of new words in the syntactic structure of the sentences in which new words are encountered.

Syntactically based grammar A grammar in which rules operate over formal categories, such as Noun and Verb. These formal categories are not defined in terms of their meaning or their communicative function.

Syntax A system of rules for building phrases out of words (which belong to particular grammatical categories, such as Noun and Verb) and for building sentences out of these constituent phrases.

Tadpole-frog problem The problem of accounting for the change from a semantically based system to a syntactically based system if one describes children's grammars as semantically based. This change is compared to the metamorphosis that tadpoles undergo to become frogs. *See also* Semantically based grammar; Syntactically based grammar.

Taxonomic assumption The child's assumption that words label categories of things of the same kind (taxonomic categories). This assumption is proposed as one word learning constraint that helps children learn the meaning of new words.

Telegraphic speech Speech, typical of 2-year-old children, that includes primarily content words and omits such grammatical morphemes as determiners and endings on nouns and verbs. So named because the result sounds like sentences adults use in writing telegrams.

Theory of mind (ToM) The theory that other persons have minds and that mental contents such as beliefs and intentions guide others' behavior. Adults operate according to this theory; children must develop this theory.

Theory theory The theory that the developing child constructs his or her understanding of the world on the basis of experience, much as scientists construct theories of the world on the basis of data.

Topic What a sentence or longer unit of discourse is about.

Total communication An approach to language education for the deaf in which oral language is combined with a signing or gestural system.

Transitional forms Utterances such as vertical constructions that children produce between producing

single-word and clear two-word utterances.

Underextension Using words with a range of meanings narrower than the meaning of the word in the target language (such as using *car* to refer only to cars seen from a window). *See also* Overextension.

Universal Grammar (UG) The set of principles and parameters that describes the structure of all languages of the world; hypothesized by some to be part of the child's innate knowledge. *See also* Principles and parameters theory.

Usage-based grammar A theory of language according to which grammar arises from experience and reflects aspects of that experience, such as the frequency of particular constructions—in contrast to a generative approach in which grammar is an abstract system that is not fully determined by experience.

Variegated babbling Strings of non-reduplicated syllables.

Vegetative sounds Sounds that accompany biological functions, such as breathing, sucking, and burping.

Vocal play The activity of producing a variety of different consonant and vowel sounds that is typical of infants between 16 and 30 weeks.

Voice onset time (VOT) The time lag in the production of a consonant between the release of air and the beginning of vocal cord vibration. Consonants with a VOT greater than 25 milliseconds are perceived as voiceless (such as [p]), and VOTs less than 25 milliseconds are perceived as voiced (such as [b]).

Voicing A feature of sound production in which the vocal cords vibrate as air is released in the production of a consonant. Consonants [b] and [g] are voiced; [p] and [k] are voiceless.

Wernicke's aphasia The condition in which patients speak rapidly

and fluently but without meaning as a result of damage to part of the left hemisphere of the brain.

Wernicke's area An area in the left hemisphere of the brain, located next to the primary auditory cortex, that is responsible for language functions.

Wh- questions Questions that begin with *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, *when*, or *how*.

Whole-language approach The method of reading instruction based on the notions that children do not need explicit phonics instruction to learn to read and that children will learn to read if they are surrounded

by interesting print material. Activities focus on reading for meaning rather than instruction in letter-sound correspondences.

Whole-object assumption A word learning constraint according to which children assume that a new word refers to a whole object, not to a part or property of an object.

Whorfian hypothesis The hypothesis that language influences thought and, therefore, that differences among languages cause differences in the cognition of speakers of those languages. Also known as the linguistic relativity hypothesis.

Williams syndrome A rare disorder that produces severe mental retardation but leaves language functions relatively intact.

Word A sound sequence that symbolizes meaning and can stand alone. *See also* Morpheme.

Word extension The range of exemplars to which a word refers.

Word spurt The increase in the rate at which children acquire new words; it occurs sometime around the achievement of a 50-word vocabulary, or about 18 months of age.

Yes/no questions Questions that can be answered with *yes* or *no*.

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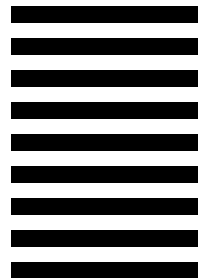
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