

- Verb + object Suzy juice (Suzy is drinking juices)
- Subject + complement Daddy busy (daddy is busy)

Also, when a child tries to repeat what an adult has said, it will miss out part of the sentence, but what is retained is usually grammatically correct:

ADULT: Look Charlie, Ben's playing in the garden

CHILD: Play garden

This example shows how children in this stage focus on key words. Words that convey less information such as 'in' or 'the' for example, are missed out.

Confusion as to what a child actually means during the two-word stage can arise because children don't know tenses or plurals yet. Also, depending on the CONTEXT of the utterance it might have more than one meaning. Take the following example from Bloom (1973):

WHAT WAS SAID	ACTION	POSSIBLE MEANING
Mummy sock	Child picks up sock	This is mummy's sock
Mummy sock	Mother puts sock on child	Mummy's putting my sock on

The Telegraphic Stage

From the age of about 2, children begin producing three and four word utterances. Some will be grammatically complete such as 'Amy likes tea' or 'Mummy sleeps upstairs' but others will have essential grammatical elements missing such as 'Daddy home now' or 'Laura broke plate'. These utterances are similar to some of those used in the two-word stage - they can often make sense, but key elements are missing such as:

- Articles - 'a' 'the'
- Auxiliary verbs - 'is' 'has'
- Prepositions - 'to' 'on' 'for'
- Conjunctions - 'but' 'because'

Progress during this stage is rapid, and by the age of 5, children have usually mastered sentences containing more than one clause, conjunctions and 'ing' 'ed' or 's' endings to words and verbs. These are known as **inflectional affixes**.

Acquisition of Inflections

Research indicates there is a predictable pattern in the acquisition of inflectional affixes. These are word endings such as -ed and -ing. Functional words such as articles like 'a' and 'the' and also auxiliary verbs seem to be acquired in a regular order.

Brown (1973) studied children's language development between the ages of 20 months and 36 months and found the sequence shown below occurred regularly. The features are also listed in the order in which they were acquired:

- 1) -ing
- 2) plural '-s'
- 3) possessive '-s'
- 4) the, a
- 5) past tense -ed
- 6) third person singular verb ending - s (eg): he sings
- 7) auxiliary verb 'be' (eg): I am dancing

Cruttenden (1979) divided the acquisition of inflections into the following three stages:

- 1) In the first stage, children memorize words on an individual basis

- Frequent use of child's name and an absence of pronouns.

Grammar

- Simpler constructions
- Frequent use of imperatives
- High degree of repetition
- Use of personal names instead of pronouns (e.g. 'Mummy' not 'I')
- Fewer verbs, modifiers and adjectives

Large number of one-word utterances

- Deixis used to point child's attention to objects or people
- Repeated sentence frames eg. "that's a"
- Use more simple sentences and fewer complex and passives.
- Omission of past tenses, inflections (plurals and possessives).
- Use more commands, questions and tag questions.
- Use of EXPANSIONS - where the adult fills out the child's utterance.
- Use of RE-CASTINGS - where the child's vocabulary is put into a new utterance.

Pragmatics

- Lots of gesture and warm body language.
- Fewer utterances per turn - stopping frequently for child to respond.
- Supportive language (expansions and re-castings).

Are there are variations due to the gender of the caregiver?

Research has suggested that fathers are more demanding than mothers, using more direct questions and a wider range of vocabulary.

What effects do you think this kind of speech has on children?

Some claim that it retains the attention of the child, others that it makes language more accessible.

Some claim that children learn by repetition

Can this explain the fact that children can produce sentences which they have never heard before?

Others claim that 'babytalk' actually interferes with language development because children learn babyish words and sentences instead of the real language.

Not every culture uses such forms of child-directed speech. In Samoa and Papua New Guinea, adults speak to children as they speak to adults, and children acquire language at the same pace as elsewhere.

Features and purposes of Child Directed Speech

CDS aims to:

- Attract and hold the baby's attention.
- Help the process of breaking down language into understandable chunks.
- Make the conversation more predictable by referring to the here-and-now.

Research

Clarke-Stewart (1973)

Found that children whose mothers talk more have larger vocabularies.

Katherine Nelson (1973)

Found that children at the holophrastic stage whose mothers corrected them on word choice and pronunciation actually advanced more slowly than those with mothers who were generally accepting.

(Brown, Cazden and Bellugi 1969)

Found that parents often respond to the TRUTH value of what their baby is saying, rather than its grammatical correctness. For example, a parent is more likely to respond to "there doggie" with "Yes, it's a dog!" than "No, it's there is a dog."

Berko and Brown (1960)

Brown spoke to a child who referred to a "fis" meaning "fish". Brown replied using "fis" and the child corrected him again but saying "fis". Finally, Brown reverted to "fish" to which the child responded "Yes, fis." This shows that babies do not hear themselves in the same way that they hear others and no amount of correction will change this.

Child Directed Speech - some conclusions

- Recent research argues the CDI doesn't directly help babies learn language, instead it helps parents communicate with children = its purpose is social rather than educational.
- In some cultures (non-western) babies are expected to blend in with adult interaction and no special accommodation is made in speech addressed to them. These children still go through the same developmental stages at roughly the same time as long as there is EXPOSURE to language. However Clark & Clark's research suggests that children who are only exposed to adult speech do not acquire the same standard of language as those whose parents speak to them directly in a modified manner.
- The older argument that baby-talk is 'harmful' to a child learning a new language is being replaced. People now think it's beneficial to the child.
- A child's language improves when in contact with an adult who speaks to them directly.

Language Acquisition