

ENGB3 – Language Acquisition (Section A): Developing Speech

Phonological Development

Language development begins in the womb

DeCasper and Spence found that newborns sucked their dummies more when their mothers read them the same story that they'd read aloud in the last six months of pregnancy

Pre-Verbal Stages

- Crying
- Cooing and laughter (6 – 8 weeks)
- Babbling – making vowel and consonant sounds (6 months)
- Proto-words (invented words, used repeatedly to express a specific meaning)

Later Stages of Speech

- First word = 1 year old
- At around 18 months, some use of stress to distinguish meanings (e.g. **my** car)
- By 2 ½ they can use all of the vowels and 2/3 of the consonants
- Consonants are first used correctly at the beginnings of words
- Often simplify their pronunciation to make their words easier to say

Different Types of Sounds Produced

- Plosives – airflow is blocked for a brief time, e.g. p and b
- Fricatives – airflow is partially blocked, air moves through, e.g. f and s
- Nasals – air moves through nose, e.g. m and n
- Laterals – tongue is placed on ridge of teeth, e.g. l

Early Phonological Errors

- Cluster reduction – when there are two or more consonants together in a word, a child may drop one of the consonants e.g. 'geen' instead of 'green'
- Deletion – "do" instead of "dog"
- Substitution – "wain" instead of "rain"
- Addition – "doggie"
- Reduplication – "dada"

Mistakes happen as children can't overcome the physical complexities of pronunciation. They know how words should be pronounced, just can't say them properly yet. (Berko and Brown's 'fis' experiment demonstrates this)