

First Words

- **Protowords or “pre-words”**
 - aka vocables, performatives
 - aka phonetically consistent forms
 - typical at 9-10 months
 - characterized by purposeful production
- **First word**
 - 12 months
- **What is a word?**
 - Owens (2008) p. 191: (1) some likeness to adult form, (2) consistent use, (3) referent or meaning present

Children’s First Words

- **People, objects, actions in child’s environment**
- **Speech characteristics:**
 - 1 or 2 syllables, often reduplicated
 - CV, VC, CVCV, less often CVC
 - usually /m, b, w, d/
- **Review 50-word lexicon, nominals/nouns predominate but style differences**

Pragmatic Development - Single Word Stage (Owens, 2008, pp. 192-198)

- **Dore’s Primitive Speech Acts (Table 7.1)**
- **Presupposition - assumption the speaker makes about what the listener knows about the topic of conversation**
 - evidence emerges in child’s choice of words, toddlers seem to know what word is needed in the conversation
 - skill develops throughout preschool and school-age years

Early Word Meanings

- Children’s early word meanings are not the same as adult meanings
- **Overextensions**
 - word is used by child to refer to more than just the adult referent
 - ex. “doggie” for all animals, “daddy” for all men
- **Underextensions**
 - word is used by child in a way that is too narrow or refers more specifically than adult meaning
 - ex. “doggie” only used for family pet

Development of Word Meanings - Semantic Feature Hypothesis

- words are made up of pieces of meaning called semantic features
 - ex. “doggie” includes animal, pet, furry, 4 legs
- some words have overlapping features, but separated by unique features
- children gradually acquire the semantic features associated with words
- explains overextensions
- early semantic features include: size, shape, texture, taste, movement

Word Meaning Development - 2 more theories

- **Functional Core Hypothesis**
 - Early words are not based on unchanging perceptual features
 - Early words represent functions or actions in child’s environment (e.g., performatives)
- **Prototype Hypothesis** (see Figure 7.1)
 - Child uses both perceptual and functional information to develop word meanings
 - Child develops a “prototype” or best exemplar that helps to define the word meaning

Substantive vs. Relational words

(Owens, 2008, p. 208)

- **Bloom’s classification based upon semantic roles of first words**
- **Substantive words**
 - refer to objects or classes of objects
 - like Fillmore’s “agents” and “objects”
 - either cause action or receive action
- **Relational words**
 - express meaning relationships between objects and events
 - tell the condition of object
 - ex. “my” “up”

Transition to 2-word utterances

- **At 18 months or 50-word vocabulary, expect first 2-word utterances**
- **Signs of emerging 2-word utterances**
 - (1) **juxtaposed utterances** aka **successive single word utterances** - two single words spoken close together but intonation still single words
 - (2) **addition of syllables with true words**
ex. /mʌ/ ball; /bu/ go; /te/ mine
 - (3) **combination of true word with a phonetically consistent form**
ex. /bu/ ball ; /bu/ go ; /bu/ mine

Semantic Relations – 2-word utterances

- **Semantic-Syntactic Rules (Bloom and Lahey)**
 - Early 2-word utterances express child’s knowledge of meaning relationships and word order
- **Prevalent Semantic Relations (Brown)**
 - Brown identified 8 two-term semantic relationships seen in children’s language at this stage
 - word order can vary, but often doesn’t

Semantic Relations – definitions

(Owens, 2008, pp. 214-215, see Tables 7.7, 7.8)

- **Demonstrative**
 - ex. “this,” “that”
 - used to point out a particular referent
- **Entity**
 - any labeling of an object or person in the absence of an action on it or by it
- **Attribute**
 - an adjectival description of size, shape, quality of any object or person
- **Possessor**
 - a person or thing that an object is associated with or belongs to

Semantic Relations cont’d

- **Possession**
 - a person or thing belonging to possessor (other systems don’t differentiate from entity)
- **Location or locative**
 - place where object or action is located or toward which it moves
- **Action**
 - perceivable movement or activity
 - (differs from a “state” like verbs “be,” “know”)
- **Agent**
 - performer of action
- **Object**
 - recipient of action

Semantic Relations cont’d

- **Recurrence**
 - request for additional instance or amount, resumption of event, reappearance of person or object
 - “more,” “again”
- **Nonexistence/Disappearance**
 - “no” “allgone”
- **Rejection - “no”**
- **Denial - “no,” “not”**
- **Some systems label all of above “negation”**

Three-word utterances

- When 50% of all utterances are 2-words, then 3-word utterances emerge
 - often by 24 months
- According to Brown, first 3-word utterances are created by two processes: “expansions” and “recombinations”
- Expansions
 - agent - action (mommy go) becomes possessor - agent - action (my mommy go)
- Recombinations
 - agent - action (boy hit) and action - object (hit ball) become agent - action - object (boy hit ball)

Comprehension and Production

- What is the relationship between comprehension and production?
 - We don't know.....⊗
- Typically believed that comprehension develops before or ahead of production
 - true for some aspects and at some times during development
 - not true all the time
 - probably separate systems, separate development

Early Comprehension and Production Development

- Overall, comprehension precedes production in early development
- Comprehension for first words by 6 to 9 months
- Age 12 months
 - comprehension = approx 50 words
 - production = first word
- Age 18 months
 - comprehension = 100-150 words
 - production = 50 words

Comprehension Skills

■ By 12 -18 months

- children understand new words every day
- understand prepositions "in" "on" in context
- follow one-step commands, "Put it on," "Give it to me," in context
- find objects not in sight
- identify common body parts

■ By 18 - 24 months

- identify pictures
- understand some action words, "Make the baby walk."
- understand early 2 & 3-term semantic relations
