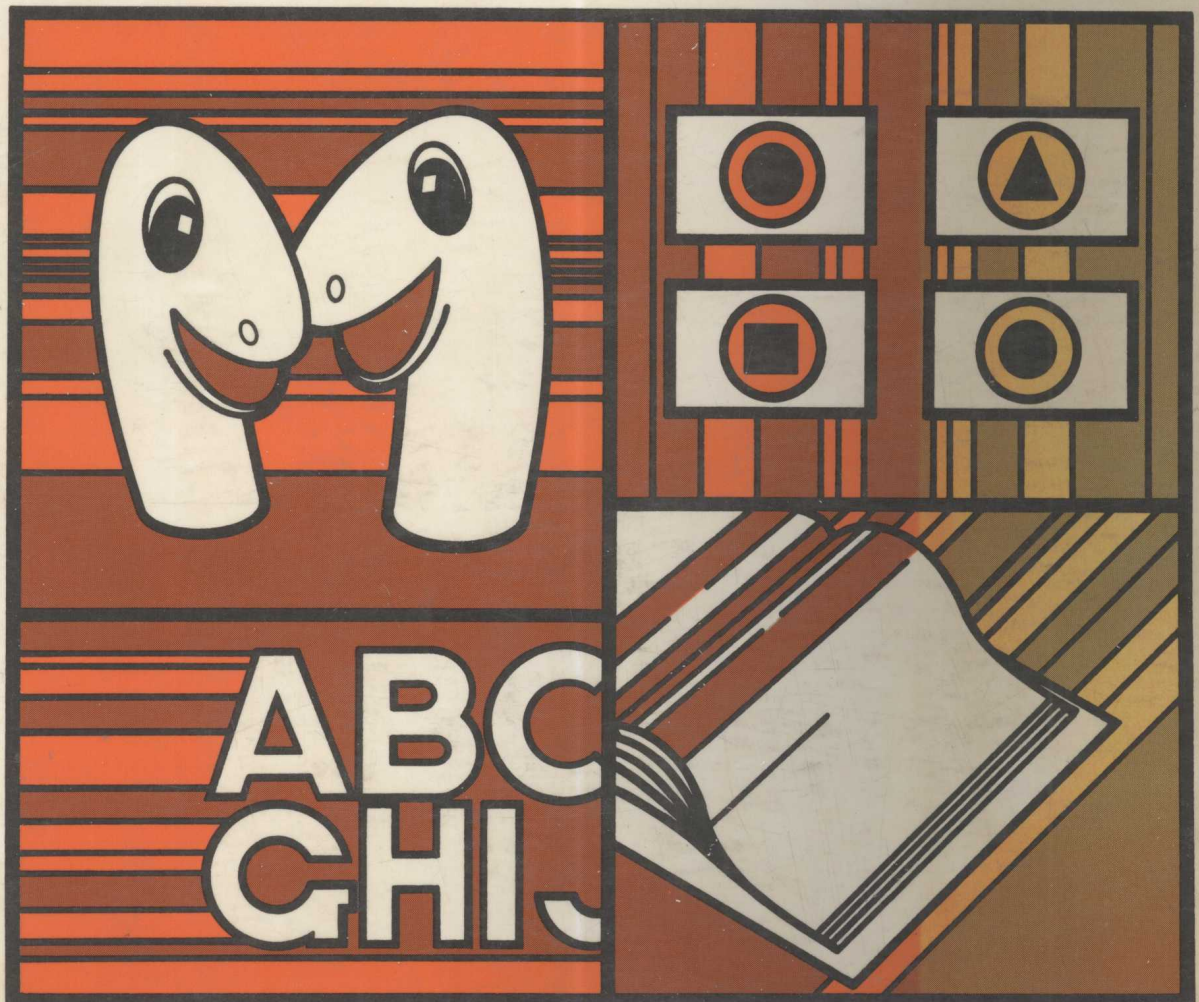


Early Childhood Experiences in Language Arts

Second Edition



JEANNE M. MACHADO

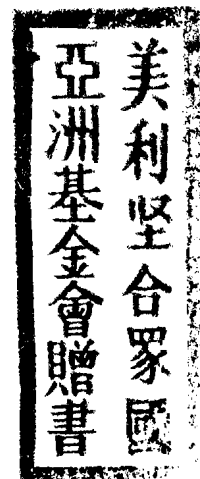


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Second Edition

*To Frank, Danielle, Katrina
and Claire. Each is a
uniquely special gift.*





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JEANNE M. MACHADO

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PREFACE

EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN LANGUAGE ARTS is intended for college classroom use and as a self-instructional tool. It is hoped that confidence and skill gained by the reader will give young children an enthusiastic companion who enjoys and encourages them in their discovery of the language arts.

Teachers who work with young children can make early childhood education centers come alive. A child's development of skills in the language arts — listening, speaking, writing, and reading — is a part of an interesting and vital language development program.

The planned experiences and daily activities in this text are based on an understanding of young children and their potential. The aim of the teacher is to develop the child's comprehension and capacity for using written and oral language. Where applicable, the teacher is given practical guides in the planning and presentation of activities. A review of the development of language enables the reader to understand individual differences.

Certain changes have been incorporated in this revision to ensure an in-depth coverage of early childhood language arts. Theory parts of the text have been expanded, updated, and documented. Many added skill-building activities provide language experiences for young children through finger plays, listening activities, storytelling, poetry, flannel boards, speaking routines, circle and group activities, puppetry and drama, print-script, and reading readiness activities. Selected new illustrations and photos included in this edition further develop and clarify the written material. The Appendix has also been expanded to include additional teaching ideas and resources.

The author, Jeanne M. Machado, received her MA from San Jose State University and attended the University of California at Berkeley. Her experience and professional preparation in the field of childhood education includes teaching in two-year programs in Child Development and Early Childhood Education, coordination of Early Childhood Developmental Centers for the San Jose Community College District, and personal involvement as the owner of a private preschool center. She has developed commercial materials for use in Early Childhood programs and has designed, furnished, and directed developmental programs for children ages two through six years. Ms. Machado is an active participant in several professional organizations which relate to the education of young children and development of their potential.

Other books in the Delmar Early Childhood Education Series are

- Creative Activities for Young Children - Mary Mayesky, Donald Neuman, and Raymond Wlodkowski
- Administration of Schools for Young Children - Phyllis Click
- Early Childhood: Development and Education - Jeanne Mack
- Home and Community Influences on Young Children - Karen Vander Ven
- Experiences in Music for Young Children - M. C. Weller Pugmire
- Experiences in Science for Young Children - Donald Neuman
- Experiences in Math for Young Children - Rosalind Charlesworth and Deanna Radeloff
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- A Practical Guide to Solving Preschool Behavior Problems - Eva L. Essa
- Mainstreaming in Early Childhood Education - K. Eileen Allen
- Children in Your Life - Deanna Radeloff and Roberta Zechman

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Unit 1 BEGINNINGS OF COMMUNICATION

OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, the student should be able to

- Describe one theory of human language acquisition.
- Name factors which influence language development.
- Explain the meaning of perception.

Each child is a special combination of inherited traits and the influence of his environment. The qualities a child receives from both parents and the events that occur around him help shape his language development.

In a short four to five years from the time of his birth, the child's speech becomes purposeful and adultlike. The child's growing language skill is a useful tool for satisfying needs and exchanging thoughts, hopes, and dreams with others. As ability grows, the child is able to understand and use more of the resources of oral and recorded human knowledge.

The natural capacity to categorize, invent, and remember information aids a person's language acquisition. Although unique among the species, human beings are not the only ones who can communicate. Birds and other animals imitate sounds and signals. Chimpanzees exposed to experimental motor (physical) language techniques (such as American Sign Language, specially equipped machines, and plastic tokens) have surprised researchers with their language abilities. Speech itself, however, is a human trait, which is much more complex than simple parroting or primitive-level functioning.

DEFINITIONS

Language, as used in this text, refers to a system of intentional communication through sounds, signs (gestures), or symbols which are

understandable to others. The language development process includes both sending and receiving. Input (receiving) comes before output (sending). Input is organized mentally by an individual before the person can send messages.

Communication is a broader term, defined as giving and/or receiving information, signals, or messages. One can communicate with or receive communications from animals, infants, or foreign speakers in a variety of ways. Even a whistling teakettle sends a message which one can understand.

INFLUENCES ON DEVELOPMENT

Language acquisition is very complex for any child, yet most children accomplish the task quickly and easily. Many factors influence the learning of language. Sensory-motor development, the child's use of sense organs, and coordination of motor systems (body muscles) are all vital to language acquisition. Sense organs gather information through sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, figure 1-1, page 2. These sense organ impressions of people, objects, and life encounters are then sent to the brain. Each *perception* (impression received through the senses) is recorded and stored, serving as a base for future oral and written language. Sensory-motor tasks are covered in greater depth in unit 5.



Fig. 1-1 Perceiving the environment.



Fig. 1-2 Gathering impressions.



Fig. 1-3 Positive experiences and interactions are important for language acquisition.

The child's social and emotional environments play a leading role in both the quality and quantity of beginning language. Much learning occurs through contact and interaction with others in family and social settings, figure 1-2. Basic attitudes towards life, self, and other people form early as life's pleasures and pains are experienced. The young child depends on parents and other caregivers to provide what is needed for growth and *equilibrium* (a balance achieved when consistent care is given and needs are satisfied). This side of a child's development has been called the child's *affective sphere*, referring to the affectionate feelings (or lack of them) shaped through experience with others, figure 1-3.

Another important factor which is related to all others is the child's mental maturity, or ability to think. The ages, stages, and sequences of increased mental capacity are very closely related to language development. Yet, at times, language skill and intellect seem to be growing independently, with one or the other developing faster. The relation of intelligence and language development has been a subject of debate for a long time. Most scholars, however, agree these two topics are closely tied.

Cultural and social forces touch young lives with group attitudes, values, and beliefs. These have a great impact on a child's language. Some cultures expect children to look downward when adults speak, showing respect by this action. Other cultures use gestures and signaling, or seem to have limited vocabularies or common modes of thinking. All of these factors can affect language acquisition.

CURRENT THEORIES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Many scholars, philosophers, and researchers have tried to pinpoint exactly how

a child learns language. People in major fields of study such as human development, linguistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and animal study (zoology), have contributed to current theory. Three of these theories are described here.

- **Behaviorist (or Stimulus-Response) Theory.** Language is learned through imitation. Parents reward, correct, ignore, or punish the young child's communication. The child's sounds and sound combinations are uttered as imitation, at random, on impulse, without pattern or meaning. This theory is attributed to the work of B. F. Skinner, a pioneer researcher of learning theory.
- **Predetermined Theory.** Language acquisition is innate (a predetermined human capacity). Each new being has a mental ability "wired-in" which equips one to master any world language. Noam Chomsky, a linguistic researcher, says that each person has an individual Language Acquisition Device (L.A.D.). This mental device (or capacity) has several sets of language system rules (grammar) common to all known languages. As the child is living within a family, his perceptions spark this device (capacity), and the child learns the "mother tongue."
- In the third position, language acquisition is said to develop from basic social and emotional drives. These drives stem from a need for love and care and they prompt language acquisition. The child is described as an active seeker and reactor to the human social contact that is so crucial to development, figure 1-4.

Currently, there isn't one all-inclusive theory on language acquisition. While there is some truth in each, there are many relationships, unknowns, and mysteries that are still



Fig. 1-4 Loving care and attention in the early years can influence language development.

being studied. Herbert Eveloff has identified three major prerequisites (needed capabilities) for language acquisition:

- thinking ability
- a central nervous system allowing sophisticated perception
- loving care

Dr. Maria Montessori, who is well known for her work with young children, described the sequence of development shown in figure 1-5, page 4. Her games and materials were designed to follow an increasing level of difficulty.

COMMUNICATIVE BEGINNINGS IN INFANCY

Development of the ability to communicate begins even before the child is born. The prenatal environment plays an important role. Factors such as emotional and physical stress on the mother, and her health and nutrition, affect the development and health of the unborn. This, in turn, may lead to complications later in the child's language learning capabilities.

The newborn quickly makes his needs known. He cries. His mother or father

1. Individual sounds.
2. Syllables.
3. Simple words, often doubled syllables like “dada.” This is when the child first is said to speak, because the sound he produces communicates an idea.
4. Understanding and saying words that are the names of objects (nouns).
5. Understanding and saying words that refer to qualities of objects named (adjectives).
6. Understanding and saying words that refer to the relationship of objects named.
7. Explosion into language (verbs and the exact form of nouns and adjectives, including prefixes and suffixes).
8. The forms for present, past, and future tenses of verbs, use of the pronoun as a word that “stands in place of” a name.
9. Construction of sentences with mutually dependent parts.

Fig. 1-5 Montessori sequence of language acquisition. (From Maria Montessori's *The Discovery of the Child*, translated by M. Joseph Costelloe, Notre Dame, IN: Fides Publishers, 1967.)



Fig. 1-6 Cooing and touching .

responds. The parent feeds the child, holds him, and keeps him warm and dry. The sound of his parent's footsteps or voice, and the caring touch, often stops his crying. The baby has learned to anticipate. He connects the sense perceptions received at that moment to stored impressions of the past.

As a child grows, he makes vocal noises; he begins to coo after feedings. Cooing seems to be related to a child's comfort. During cooing, sounds are relaxed, low-pitched, gurgly, and are made in an open-mouthed, vowel-like way — for example, e (as in see), e (get), a (at), ah, and o, oo, ooo, figure 1-6. The infant appears to be in control of this sound making. Discomfort produces consonant-like sounds, made in a tense manner with lips partly closed.

Infants differ in significant ways from the moment of birth. However in most cases, milestones in language development are reached at about the same age and in a recognizable sequence.

An infant chooses early to gaze at his parents' faces. During the first months, a baby's entire body seems to respond in rhythm to the sound of the human voice. He recognizes subtle (fine) differences in sounds. A parent's talk and touch increases his sound making, figure 1-7. Current research continues



Fig. 1-7 A message of feelings.

to uncover responding capabilities in infants which were not known before.

Around the fifth to tenth week of life, a significant event happens — the baby's first social smile. This is a giant first step to the many parent-child two-way conversations which will follow.

Early random sound making is often called *babbling*. Close inspection shows repetitive sounds and "practice sessions" present. Babbling starts after about six weeks of age, and continues through the toddler period. It overlaps the one and two (or more) wordmaking stages ending near eighteen months of age.

It is not clearly understood why babbling occurs. Deaf infants also babble. It is felt that babbling gives the child the opportunity to use and control the mouth, throat, and lung muscles. The playfulness and purposefulness of sound making are other benefits. Possibly, a child's babbling sounds motivate him and act as a stimulus which adds variety to his existence.

Babbling is an individual act. In time, there is an increasing number of articulated (clear, distinct) vowellike, consonantlike, and syllabic sounds. Although babbling includes a wide range of sounds, as children grow older they focus on the familiar, much heard, language of the family. Other sounds are gradually dropped.

Physical contact continues to be important. Touching, holding, rocking, and other types of physical contact bring a sense of security, and a chance to respond through sound making. The active receiving of perceptions is encouraged by warm, loving parents who share a close relationship. A secure child responds more readily to the world around him. The child who lacks social and physical contact, or lives in an insecure home environment, falls behind in both the number and range of sounds made, showing differences at about six months of age.

Simple imitation of language sounds begins early. Nonverbal imitated behavior such as tongue protrusion also occurs, figure 1-8. Sound imitation becomes syllable imitation, and short words are spoken about the end of the child's first year.

UNDERSTANDING

At about ten months of age, some infants start to respond to spoken word clues. A game such as "pat-a-cake" may start him clapping and "bye-bye" or "peek-a-boo" brings about other imitations of earlier play activities with his parents. The child's language is called passive at this stage, for he receives (or is receptive). His speaking attempts will later become active (or expressive).

The infant communicates to his parents through many nonverbal actions; one way is by holding up his arms, which most often means "I want to be picked up." For other examples see figure 1-9, page 6.

Although the infant can now respond to words, he cannot speak words. Understanding comes first. At this early age there is much for the child to understand; changes in a parent's facial expression, changes in tone of voice and volume, and actions and gestures



Fig. 1-8 "I can do that."

Gesture	Meaning
Allows food to run out of mouth	Satisfied or not hungry
Pouts	Displeased
Pushes nipple from mouth with tongue	Satisfied or not hungry
Pushes object away	Does not want it
Reaches out for object	Wants to have it handed to him
Reaches out to person	Wants to be picked up
Smacks lips or ejects tongue	Hungry
Smiles and holds out arms	Wants to be picked up
Sneezes excessively	Wet and cold
Squirms and trembles	Cold
Squirms, wiggles, and cries during dressing or bathing	Resents restriction on activities
Turns head from nipple	Satisfied or not hungry

Fig. 1-9 Some common gestures of babyhood.

(From *Child Development* by Elizabeth B. Hurlock, 1972 — used with permission of McGraw-Hill Company.)



Fig. 1-10 Messages can be conveyed through gestures and tone of voice.

(figure 1-10) are all things which carry feelings and messages important to the child's well-being. The understanding of the tone of his parents' speech comes before the understanding of their words.

FIRST WORDS

Repetition of syllables such as ma, da, and ba in a child's babbling happens toward the end of the first year. If "mama" or "dada" or a close copy is said, parents show attention and joy. Language, especially in the area of speech development, is a two-way process; reaction is an important feedback to action.

Generally, first words are nouns or proper names of household objects, animals (figure 1-11), or people experienced daily. At this stage, words tend to be segments (parts) of wider happenings in the child's life. A child's word "ba" may represent a favorite often-used toy (such as a ball) found in the toy box and enjoyed with a loved parent. As the child grows in experience, a bouncing object seen in the grocery store with the babysitter will also be recognized. Laura L. Lee describes the child's development from early situation-tied first words to a broader usage:



Fig. 1-11 The name of the family pet may be among the first words a child learns.

All words in the beginning vocabulary are on the same level of abstraction. They are labels of developing categories of experiences.¹

A child finds that words can open many doors. They help him to get things, and cause his parents to act in many ways. Vocabulary quickly grows from the names of objects to words which mean action and greetings, such as "hi."

Labeling begins. The child eagerly names some things and seeks names for other things. As if playing an enjoyable game, the child echoes and repeats to the best of his ability. At times his words are not recognizable as the same words his parents offered. When conversing with young speakers, an adult must listen closely, watch for nonverbal signs, scan the situation, and use a good deal of guessing to understand the child and respond appropriately.

¹Laura L. Lee, "The Relevance of General Semantics to Development of Sentence Structure in Children's Language," in Lee Thayer (ed.) *Communication: General Semantics Perspectives* (New York: Spartan Books, 1970).

While the child is learning to walk, it seems that speech, for a short period, takes a back seat to this motor skill.

Between 15 to 18 months, while energy is concentrated upon walking, progress in talking may be slow. However, at this time the child may listen more intently to what others say.²

The slow-paced learning of new words, figure 1-12, page 8, is followed by a time of rapid growth. The child pauses briefly, listening and digesting, gathering his forces to embark on the great adventure before him — becoming a fluent speaker.

SUMMARY

Each child grows in language ability in his own way. The process starts before birth with the development of sensory organs and then continues into childhood. Parents play an important role in a child's growth and mastery of language.

Perceptions gained through life experiences serve as the base for later learning of words and speech. Babbling, sound making, and imitation occur, and first words appear.

A number of related factors influence a child's language acquisition. Most children progress through a series of language ability stages at about the same ages, and become adultlike speakers during the pre-school period. The way children learn language is not clearly understood. There are many differing theories of language acquisition.

The child progresses from receiving to sending language which is accompanied by gestures and nonverbal communication.

²Louise Binder Scott, *Learning Time with Language Experiences for Young Children* (St. Louis: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968).

Age	Language and Communication Behaviors
Birth - one month	crying to express desires (food, attention, etc.) or displeasure (pain or discomfort) small throaty sounds tense, active movement, or relaxed posture (nonverbal)
2 - 3 months	cooing, pleasurable noises, babbling, blowing and smacking sounds open vowel-like babbles fewer consonant-type babbles
4 - 6 months	sound play, single syllable-like sounds (phonemes) babbling, smiling
6 - 8 months	repeats syllables, imitates motions, uses nonverbal signals babbling play vocalizes recognition
9 - 12 months	imitates sounds, may say first word (repeated syllable or single syllable) may start jargon-like strings of sounds, gestures, grunts, squeals
13 - 20 months	two-word sentences, starting to label (name) familiar events, objects, family members may reproduce 4 or more words intonated speech increases consonant production overgeneralizes words babbling and jargon decrease during end of this period gestures and body language frequent

Fig. 1-12 Emerging language abilities.

From infancy, the child is an active participant, edging closer to the two-way process required in language usage and verbal communication.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Observe two infants (birth to 12 months). Note situations in which the infants make sounds and how adults (parent or teacher) react to the sound making.
- Describe nonverbal communication that you notice or receive in any situation with a group of people — such as in a classroom, cafeteria, family group, social group, or anywhere a group of people is assembled.
- Sit with a young infant facing you. Have a note pad handy. Remain speechless and motionless. Try to determine what moment-to-moment needs the child has, and try to fulfill each need you recognize. Try not to add anything new; just respond to what you feel the child needs. Write a description of needs observed and your feelings.
- Using the form in figure 1-13, read and review a magazine article or a research article concerning children's language development. Be prepared to read your findings to fellow students.

Topics:

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT, LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, PSYCHOLINGUISTICS, STUDIES IN ANIMAL COMMUNICATION.

Use the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* or another resource guide to locate an article.

Title of article _____

Author(s) _____

Source name _____

Date of publication _____

Number of pages _____

General findings of the research article (number of subjects, ages, testing device or procedure, results, or article main points).

SUGGESTED JOURNALS: Child Development, Young Children, Today's Education, Journal of Clinical Psychology, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Journal of Marriage and Family, Teacher, Children, Learning, Journal of Psychology, Journal of Social Psychology, Child Welfare, Exceptional Children, Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, School Review, Reading Teacher, Journal of Special Education.

MAGAZINES: Parents, Family Circle, Good Housekeeping, Instructor, Child Care and Early Education.

BOOKS: Readings in Child Development, Readings in Early Childhood Education.

Fig. 1-13 Article review form and suggested resources.

REVIEW

- A. Write your own theory of language acquisition. (A child learns language)
- B. Place in order of probable appearance in a young child's language acquisition.
- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Repeated syllables | 7. Making motions when "Pat-a-cake" is said |
| 2. Cooing | 8. Walking |
| 3. Syllables | 9. Vowellike and consonantlike sound making |
| 4. Crying | 10. Individual sounds |
| 5. Babbling | |
| 6. First words | |

- C. Answer the following questions based on the information in the unit.
1. What are the two basic factors which influence language development?
 2. How can parents help the young child develop language?
 3. What is one purpose of a child's babbling?
 4. Why is language development described as a two-way process?
 5. What are the names of the sense organs which receive and transmit messages?
 6. What is the name for impressions received through the senses?
- D. Select the one *best* answer.
1. Environmental factors which can affect future language development start
 - a. at birth.
 - b. before birth.
 - c. during infancy.
 - d. during toddlerhood.
 2. The tone of a parent's voice is
 - a. understood when a child learns to speak in sentences.
 - b. less important than the parent's words.
 - c. understood before actual words are understood.
 - d. less important than the parent's actions.
 3. Learning to speak is acquired when there is
 - a. simple imitation.
 - b. a simple receiving and sending process.
 - c. clarity of all English letter sounds.
 - d. no connection with other physical factors.
 4. According to Montessori, the child is said to speak when he can say a simple word because
 - a. articulation begins at that time.
 - b. the sound he produces communicates an idea.
 - c. he knows what he is saying.
 - d. his perceptions are at their highest level at that time.
 5. In acquiring language the child
 - a. learns only through imitation.
 - b. is one participant in a two-part process.
 - c. learns best when parents ignore the child's unclear sounds.
 - d. does not learn anything by imitating.
 6. Select the true statement about babbling.
 - a. Why babbling occurs is not clearly understood.
 - b. Babbling is unimportant.
 - c. Babbling predicts how early a child will start talking.
 - d. Babbling rarely lasts beyond one year of age.
 7. How a child acquires language is
 - a. clearly understood.
 - b. not important.
 - c. only partly understood.
 - d. rarely a subject for study.

- E. Explain the difference between language and communication.
- F. Match the words in Column I with the appropriate meaning or example in Column II.

Column I

1. perception
2. babbling
3. tone
4. B. F. Skinner
5. imitation
6. speaking vocabulary at
12 months
7. nonverbal communication
8. deprivation
9. repeated syllables
10. one of five senses
11. first words
12. recognized English lan-
guage sounds
13. authorities agree

Column II

- a. random sound production
- b. mama, dada, bye-bye
- c. the Behaviorist Theory
- d. close reproduction of alphabet
letter sounds
- e. 0-4 words
- f. language and thought are
interrelated
- g. the way words are spoken
rather than the meaning of the
words
- h. repeating sounds and actions
- i. thumb sucking, smiling, tears
- j. lack of warm, loving care
- k. impressions sent from sensory
organs to brain
- l. touching
- m. usually represent objects or
people experienced daily

Unit 2 THE TASKS OF THE TODDLER

OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, the student should be able to

- Discuss phonology, grammar, and the toddler's understanding of word meanings.
- List five characteristics of toddler language.
- Identify parent behaviors which aid the toddler's speech development.

If you were amazed at the infant's and year-old's ability, wait until you meet the toddler! Toddlerhood marks the beginning of the "critical language growth period," named for the child's speed in gaining language competency. This period seems to be the prime time for speech development. Never again during a person's lifetime will words enter the vocabulary at the same rate. Abilities emerge in giant spurts almost daily, figure 2-1. When a child stops and focuses on some specks on the floor or perhaps something larger than himself,



Fig. 2-1 Motor and language skills grow rapidly during toddlerhood.

concentration is total — every sense organ probes for data.

There are three major tasks in language acquisition which face the toddler. These are phonology (the sound system of a language), grammar, and semantics (word meanings).

PHONOLOGY

Toddlers learn the *phonology* of their native language; that is, its phonetic units, its particular and sometimes peculiar sounds. The child focuses on those heard most often. Repetition and rhythm speech-play in toddler babbling continues and remains pleasurable during early toddlerhood. Sounds which are combinations of vowels and consonants increase. T, d, w, and n are frequent sounds and most vowels are present. Difficult ones such as f, v, i, r, th, s, z, sh, ch, and j have limited clarity; some of these sounds continue to be spoken unclearly until five or six years of age.

It is a difficult task for the child to make recognizable sounds with mouth, throat, and breath control. Eric Lenneberg comments on this difficult motor control of speech-producing muscles, noting it comes ahead of many other physical skills:

Speech, which requires infinitely precise and swift movements of tongue and lips, all well-coordinated with laryngeal and respiratory