Precursors to Language Acquisition

- Receptivity
  - Hearing preferences
  - Phonemic awareness
- Production of sounds
  - Crying
  - Prelinguistic verbalizations
    - Vowels
    - Universal babbling
  - Intonation

Nonverbal Communication Skills

- Turn taking
- Joint attention
  - Gaze
  - Pointing
  - Intonation
Language Acquisition

Theories
- Behaviorism
- Maturation
- Cognitive/Interactionist

Review: Learning Theory
- Classical Conditioning
- Operant Conditioning
- Modeling

Classical Conditioning
- Unconditioned Stimulus → Unconditioned Response
- Conditioned Stimulus → Conditioned Response

Same Behavior

Unconditioned Stimulus → Unconditioned Response

Behavior

Reaction
(and effect on behavior)
**Classical Conditioning**

Unconditioned Stimulus → Unconditioned Response

Conditioned Stimulus → Conditioned Response

- **Unconditioned Stimulus**: Occur at Same Time
- **Conditioned Stimulus**: Same Behavior

**Classical Conditioning: Pros & Cons**

- **Support**: Good explanation for first words
- **Contradiction**:
  - Doesn’t explain
  - Novel words/sentences
  - Fast mapping
  - Divorces language from purpose

**Fast Mapping**

- Second year naming explosion
- Assumptions:
  1. Name refers to whole object
  2. New name for familiar object refers to subgroup
     - Type
     - Proper name
  3. If all names are known, word is adjective or verb
**Processing Language**

“That’s a rabbit”

“That’s the Easter Bunny.”

“That’s white.”

“That’s an animal.”

“That’s Harvey.”

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**Operant Conditioning**

Behavior ➔ Reaction ➔ Change in Behavior

Pleasant

• reward

• negative reinforcement

Unpleasant

• punishment

↓

Increases Behavior

Decreases Behavior

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**Operant Conditioning Pros & Cons**

**Support**

- Parents give lots of feedback
- Communication is own reinforcement

**Contradiction**

- Parents do not reinforce grammar
- Reinforcement rarely tied to specific words
**Modeling**

- **Support**
  - Lots of repetition
  - Learn common words first
  - Learn colloquial expressions
- **Contradiction**
  - Imitation is selective
  - Produce novel sentences

**Maturation**

- **Noam Chomsky**
- **Language Acquisition Device**
  - Physical brain structure
  - Preprogrammed to seek language rules

**Maturation**

- **Support:**
  - Stable pattern of language acquisition
  - Regions of brain tied to speech skills
  - Critical and sensitive periods
- **Contradiction:**
  - Multiple regions of brain involved
  - Plasticity of early brain development
  - No specific part of brain tied to grammar
Cognitive / Interactionist
- Environment and child work together
- Children
  - Innate motivation for control
  - Language is path to goals
- Parents
  - Use child directed speech (motherese)
  - Simplify and exaggerate language
  - Model and expand communication

Pattern of Language Development

Holographic (1 Word) Speech
- First 10-12 words around 1 year
- Naming explosion around 18 months
- Common errors:
  - Overextensions
  - Underextensions
  - Simplification
**Telegraphics (2 Word) Speech**

- **Characteristics**
  - Noun plus
  - Absence of “filler” words
- **Advantages**
  - More explicit
  - Word order can convey cause

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**Increasing complexity:**

- Grammar rules
  - Grammatical morphemes
  - Overregularization
  - Semantic bootstrapping

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**Key Concepts & Terms**

- **Skills & Characteristics**
  - Listening preferences
  - Phonemic awareness
  - Intonation
  - Prelinguistic verbalizations
  - Universal babbling
  - Child directed speech (motherese)
  - Holographic speech
  - Telegraphic speech
  - Overextensions & underextensions
  - Oversimplification
  - Overregularization
### Key Concepts & Terms

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