Language development

• Western education & symbolic competence: What is assumed? Valued?
  - Humans use many forms of representation.
  - Forms required/emphasized by schools: math and language

• Language: what makes it distinctive?
  - abstract, arbitrary symbols
  - unlimited combinations: decomposable & synthetic [define; examples??]
  - decontextualized [define??]
What teachers should know about language development

• Challenges to language development:
  - Parents and teachers are agents of language and literacy learning, but not in the same way.
  - Spoken language is medium of teaching; written language is medium of assessment
  - Culture, schooling, and language development:
    • Large number of bilingual students in CA: What do teachers need to know about L1 vs. L2 learning?
    • Different cultures value different language skills
Typical language development

• By 1st birthday, infants have learned…
  - which speech sounds occur in their language
  & how they combine (words, phrases, & sentences).
  - some common words; might produce a few.
  - conventions of social interaction:
    • games (e.g., “peekaboo”)
    • showing; following gaze
    • turn-taking (“protoconversations”)
• During the second year they will…
  - start combining words
examples of emerging language...

• 1-year-olds:
  - "uh-oh," "ba" [bottle], "dada"; "no"; "up"; "teddy"; "hello"

• 2-year-olds:
  - “mine ball,” “no wanna go in dere”

• 3-year-olds:
  - "I'm going to be the angry devil, and I'm going to scare you. I'm gonna come out of the mountain, and...sing da music to scare you....But this mountain is annoying!"
The miracle of word learning?

WE'RE PACKING UP?

YEP. I'VE HAD ENOUGH. WHAT A ROTTEN WEEK!

WAP

DID YOU KNOW WHAT ANY OF DAD'S WORDS MEANT?

NO, BUT I WROTE THEM DOWN SO WE CAN LOOK 'EM UP WHEN WE GET HOME.
What is an “average” vocabulary?

Production Vocabulary from Parent Report (CDI)
Learning words

• Why is word learning important?
  - Best predictor of reading ability

• How do children learn words?
  - Ostension, definition, stories, games

• Importance of context? (e.g., gaze following)

• Errors in word learning
  - Overextension, underextension
  - Failure to learn semantic relations even with many reps
Learning structure: syntax development

• “Mice-eater” and “rats-eater”: How can children learn structure without instruction?
  - Negative evidence: Does it reveal abstract patterns?
  - No correction, but parents sometimes expand:
    • Child: “Milk.” Adult: “You want some milk?”

• The growth of syntax:
  - First 2-word combinations: 18-24 months:
    • “Daddy sit”; “Mommy sock”; “sit chair?”; crayon big”
  - Multiword speech by 2-year-olds:
    • “I want some eggs”; “What cowboy doing?”; “I watch it”
  - Later acquisition: Wh- questions, passive
Learning modes and practices

• Pan & Snow:
  - Conversational skills: how do they develop?
    • turn-taking; topic continuation
    • expressing intent; responding to others
    • conversational maxims
    • conversation repairs
  - Discourse skills
    • taking another’s perspective
    • expressing own perspective
    • stances (e.g., counterfactual)
    • genre
Summary: Children’s Language

- By age 3, most children are mostly fluent, but...
  - Word learning still important (ex: 5-yr-olds may confuse color words)
  - Mastering syntactic details:
    - ex: “The dog was bitten by the cat”
  - Learning to communicate effectively:
    - ex: knowing a message was ambiguous
- Spoken language in school communication
  - Communicative disorders, LEP, socio-linguistic factors can complicate teaching and learning
  - Written language is related but distinct