

Lecture 7

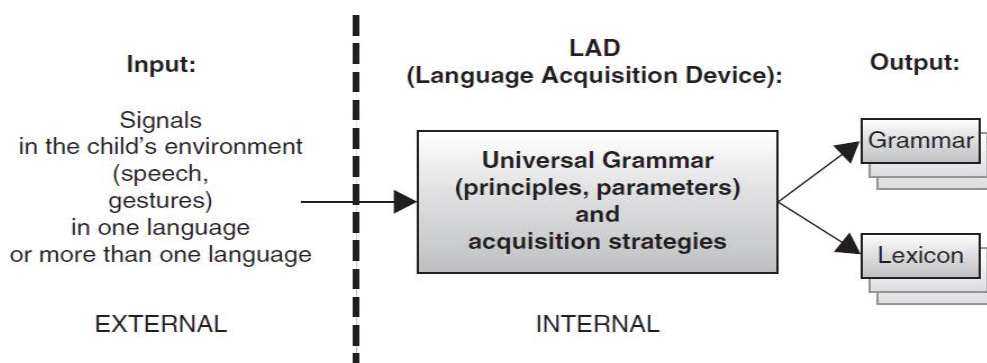
The Acquisition of Language (1)

Contents:

- **Language Acquisition Device (LAD)**
- **Early Stages of Language Acquisition:**
 - Before birth to 12 months
 - 12 months to 24 months
 - The pre-school years

Language Acquisition Device (LAD):

LAD can be **defined** as: a property of the child's brain that gives it a tendency for acquiring language



Early Stages of Language Acquisition:

- **Before birth to 12 months:**

Before birth:

- Hearing begins to develop at around 18 weeks
 - Soon after the development of hearing, the fetus starts to respond to auditory stimulation.
 - Hence, it can be argued that humans' sensitivity to language start even before birth

From birth to 12 months:

- Infants have had access to the general prosody (the rhythm and intonation) before they were born
 - Thus, they are able to recognize their mother's voice
 - Most children start to discriminate many phonemic contrasts at this stage
 - Newly-born infants have had access to the general prosody (the rhythm and intonation) before they were born
 - Thus, they are able to recognize their mother's voice
 - Most children start to discriminate many phonemic contrasts in this period (before they are 12 months old)
 - Babbling: Infants start to babble (i.e. produce consonant-vowel strings) after the 6th month.

- **From 12 months to 24 months:**

- Children spend a few months in the **holophrastic stage** (one-word stage). One word, such as milk, can be used to convey the meaning of an entire phrase.

- **Pre-school years:**

Vocabulary spurt: Soon after the child leaves the holophrastic stage, vocabulary acquisition speeds up rapidly.

In average, the child acquires from 4 to 8 new words everyday in his/her pre-school years.

Exercise

- **The holophrastic stage is:**
 - A. Before birth
 - B. Between birth and 12 months
 - C. Between 12 months and 24 months
 - D. After 24 months

The answer is C