



# First Language Acquisition

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# 1. L1 Acquisition:

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- L1, L2 and FL:

L1: first language, acquired as child.

L2: second language.

FL: foreign language.

What is the difference between L2 and FL?

- Acquisition and Learning:

Acquisition: the gradual development in using L1 or L2 naturally in a *communicative situations*.

Learning: the conscious process of accumulating knowledge of language, in an *institutional setting*.



## 2.Characteristics:

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First language acquisition is characterized by:

1. Its speed.
2. It occurs without an *overt* instruction.
3. It supports the idea that there is *an innate predisposition* in the human infant to acquire language.



## 3. Basic Requirements:

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- Interaction with language users. Language is not genetically inherited, but is culturally transmitted.  
e.g. Genie P. 145
- The child must be physically capable of sending and receiving sounds.

What about *deaf children*, and *normal children of deaf parents*? Are they able to acquire L1 as normal children do?



## 4. The acquisition schedule:

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- Normal children develop at the same time , along much the same schedule, like many other physical activities.
- This biological schedule is tied to the maturation of the infant's brain.



## 5. 1. Caregiver speech:

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- Normally, infants acquire language by interacting with older children and adults at home environment.
- Adults use simplified speech style to address children called *caregiver speech*, *baby talk*, *motherese*, or *child directed speech*.
- Caregiver speech : is speech addressed to young children by adults or older children.



## 5. 2. Features of caregiver speech:

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1. Frequent use of questions, often using exaggerated intonation, extra loudness and slower tempo with longer poses.
2. Simplified words. (*nana*)
3. Alternative forms with repeated simple sounds and syllables. (*choo- choo, wawa*)
4. Simple sentence structure and a lot of repetition.



## 6. Stages of acquisition process:

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1. Cooing and babbling.
2. The one-word stage ( holophrastic).
3. The two-word stage .
4. Multiple-word speech (telegraphic speech).





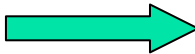
## 6.1.Cooing and Babbling:( 1<sup>st</sup> Year)

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- First three months:

Produce sequence of vowel sounds (high vowels /i/,/u/).

- Four months:

Produce velar consonants /k/ and /g/.  ‘cooing’ or ‘gooing’.

- Five months:


Differentiate between vowels /i/ & /u/, and syllables [ba] & [ga].



## 6.1.Cooing and Babbling:( 1<sup>st</sup> Year)

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- Six-eight months:

Produce a number of vowels and consonants, and combinations ba-ba, ga-ga  babbling .

- Nine- ten months:

More variation in combinations produced ba-ba, da-da, ma-ma.

- Ten- eleven months:

More complex syllable combinations produced ma-da-ga-ba.

\* There is a substantial variation among children in terms of *the age at which particular features of linguistic development occur.*



## 6.2. The one-word stage. ( holophrastic)

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- Twelve- eighteen months:

Children use single terms to refer to everyday objects such as ‘ milk’ , ‘cat’ , ‘cup’ ---.

- One- word stage (holophrastic): refers to the period in L1 acquisition when children can produce single form functioning as phrase or sentence.
- Children may extend the use of these words.

## 6.3. The two-word stage :

- Eighteen- twenty months:

More than 50 words.

- Two years:

Use words combinations e.g. baby chair.

The interpretation of these combinations is tied to the context.



## 6.4. Multiple-word speech (telegraphic speech).

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- Two and a half year-five years:  
Produce a large number of utterances.
- Multiple-word speech (telegraphic speech): string of words (lexical morphemes without inflectional morphemes) in phrases.  
e.g. dady go bye-bye.
- Stages:
  1. Lexical morphemes.
  2. Some inflectional morphemes.
  3. Simple prepositions (in, on).



## 6.4. Multiple-word speech (telegraphic speech).

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- By two –years and half, child develop sentence capacity and can get the word order correct.
- By three, vocabulary has grown to hundreds of words and pronunciation becomes closer to adults.



## 7. The Acquisition process:

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- As stated earlier. That L1 acquisition does not require an overt instruction.
- There have been various proposals concerning the psychological process involved in acquiring language.
- Some proposed that children learn language through imitation, reinforcement and other similar processes.

# 7.1. Do Children learn through imitation?



CHILD: *My teacher **holded** the baby rabbits and we patted them.*

MOTHER: *Did you say your teacher **held** the baby rabbits?*

CHILD: *Yes.*

MOTHER: *What did you say she did?*

CHILD: *She **holded** the baby rabbits and we patted them.*

MOTHER: *Did you say she **held** them tightly?*

CHILD: *No, she **holded** them loosely.*



# 7.1. Do Children learn through reinforcement?

Child: Want other one spoon, Daddy.

Father: You mean, you want the other spoon.

Child: Yes, I want other one spoon, please Daddy.

Father: Can you say "the other spoon"?

Child: Other . . . one . . . spoon.

Father: Say "other".

Child: Other.

Father: "spoon"

Child: Spoon.

Father: "Other spoon".

Child: Other . . . spoon. Now give me other one spoon?

## 7.1. Do Children learn through reinforcement?

CHILD: *Nobody don't like me.*

MOTHER: *No, say "nobody likes me".*

CHILD: *Nobody don't like me.*

(Eight repetitions of this dialog)

MOTHER: *No, now listen carefully; say "nobody likes me".*

CHILD: *Oh! Nobody don't likes me.*



## 7.2. The Acquisition process:

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- The ease and rapidity of children language acquisition and the uniformity of the stages of development, despite the poverty of stimulus they receive, suggest that language faculty is innate and that infant is endowed with UG.
- Universal Grammar (UG) ,is not grammar of a specific language such as Arabic or English, represents the principles which all human languages conform.
- Children construct grammar based on the linguistic input they receive and are guided by UG.



## 8. Developing Morphology:

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- By two years and a half:

Child starts to incorporate some inflectional morphemes.

- Sequence of acquisition:

1- *'-ing' form*. e.g. cat sitting , Mummy reading

2- *Regular plural '-s'*. e.g. cats, boys.

This stage is often accompanied by the process of *overgeneralization*. e.g. mans, mens, feets, foots.

Overgeneralization: regular  irregular



## 8. Developing Morphology:

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3- *Possessive* ‘-’s’. e.g. girl’s dog, Mummy’s book

4- *Past tense*:

a- regular forms: ‘-ed’ ( played, walked).

b- irregular forms : ‘be’ verbs( was, were), (went, came).

This stage is often accompanied by *overgeneralization* and the disappear of irregular forms.

c- Child is able to use regular and irregular forms after the age of four.

5- 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present tense ‘-s’. e.g. comes, looks.



## 8. Developing Morphology:

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- Throughout this sequence, there is a great deal of variability. Individual children may produce ‘good’ forms one day and ‘odd’ forms the next.
- This suggests that child is focusing on *communication and interaction rather than correctness.*



## 9. Developing Syntax:

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- We will look at the development of two structures (forming question & negatives) that seem to be acquired in a regular way by most English –speaking children.
- In the development of these two structures, there are three identifiable stages:
  - Stage 1 :18 -26 months
  - Stage 2 : 22 -30 months
  - Stage 3 : 24- 40 months



# 9.1. Forming Questions:

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- Stage 1:

*Where kitty?*

*Doggie?*

*Where horse go?*

*Sit chair?*

- Stage 2:

*What book name?*

*You want eat?*

*Why you smiling?*

*See my doggie?*

- Stage 3:

*Can I have a piece?*

*Did I caught it?*

*Will you help me?*

*How that opened?*

*What did you do?*

*Why kitty can't stand up?*





## 9.1. Forming Questions:

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- Stage 1:

Wh- form +expression / an expression+ rising intonation

- Stage 2:

More complex expressions. More use of wh- forms.

Using raising intonation strategy.

- Stage 3:

Inversion of subject and verb appear in yes-no questions  
not Wh- questions.



## 9.2. Forming Negatives:

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- Stage 1:

*no mitten      not a teddy bear      no fall      no sit there*

- Stage 2:

*He no bite you  
That not mommy*

*I don't want it  
You can't dance*

- Stage 3:

*I didn't caught it  
She won't let go*

*He not taking it  
This not ice cream*



## 9.2. Forming Negatives:

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- Stage 1:

Putting (no, not) at the beginning.

- Stage 2:

(no, not) before verbs not at the beginning.

Using ( don't, can't).

- Stage 3:

(no, not) before verbs not at the beginning.

Using ( didn't, won't).



## 10. Developing Semantics:

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- During the holophrastic stage, many children use their limited vocabulary to refer to a large number of unrelated objects.

e.g. a child using the word ball to refer to moon, tomato, apple.

- This process called *overextension*.
- Overextension: (in L1) refers to the use of one word to refer to more than one object.
- Overextension has been documented in speech production not comprehension.

e.g. when the same child asked about the ball, he was able to pick it up from a set of round objects including apple-----.



## 10. Developing Semantics:

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- Lexical relations:

- a- Hyponymy:

Animal- **bird** –nightingale

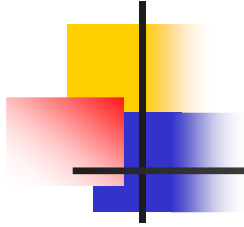
Plant –**flower**- tulip

The child will almost use the middle level term like adults.

- b- Antonymy:

Antonymous relations are acquired fairly late. (after the age of five)

e.g. P.159



- Despite the fact that the child is still acquiring aspects of his native language through the later years of childhood , it can be normally assumed that, by the age of five, the child has completed the greater part of the basic language acquisition process.
- According to some, the child is then in a good position to start learning a second language.



**Next**

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## Second Language Acquisition