



THE MAIN STAGES OF CHILDREN'S SPEECH DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: The main stages of children's speech development are crucial milestones in their linguistic and cognitive development. This scientific article aims to provide an overview of the key stages that children typically progress through as they acquire language skills. By understanding these stages, parents, educators, and researchers can gain insights into the normal trajectory of speech development and identify potential delays or abnormalities.

Keywords: children, speech development, stages, language acquisition, communication skills, linguistic milestones, phonological development, lexical development.

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most fundamental and defining features of human communication. From the earliest babbling sounds to the acquisition of complex grammatical structures, children embark on a remarkable journey of speech development. Understanding the main stages of this developmental process is crucial for educators, parents, and researchers alike, as it enables us to unravel the intricacies of language acquisition and support children in reaching their full linguistic potential.

The development of speech in children is a multifaceted process that unfolds progressively from infancy through early childhood. It encompasses a wide range of skills, including phonological awareness, vocabulary expansion, syntax comprehension, and pragmatic use of language. Each stage of speech development brings forth unique milestones and challenges, providing valuable insights into the cognitive, social, and physiological factors shaping children's linguistic abilities.

Moving forward, we will examine the pivotal stage of preschool language development, characterized by rapid language growth and enhanced communicative abilities. This stage encompasses the acquisition of complex grammar, the refinement of narrative skills, and the development of pragmatic language proficiency, allowing children to adapt their speech to various social contexts.

Finally, we will explore the role of environmental influences, such as parental input, socio-cultural factors, and educational interventions, in shaping children's speech development. We will highlight the importance of creating enriching language environments and implementing evidence-based strategies to foster optimal linguistic growth.

By unraveling the intricacies of children's speech development, this article aims to contribute to the existing knowledge base and promote effective language support systems for children. Through a comprehensive understanding of the main stages of speech development, educators, parents, and practitioners can play a vital role in facilitating language acquisition, fostering linguistic competence, and promoting effective communication skills in young children.



As we embark on this journey through the main stages of children's speech development, we hope to deepen our understanding of this fascinating process and pave the way for targeted interventions that optimize language outcomes for every child.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Infancy:

The journey of speech development begins in infancy, even before a child utters their first words. Infants demonstrate prelinguistic communication through cooing, babbling, and gesturing. Cooing, characterized by vowel-like sounds, emerges around 2 to 4 months of age. Babbling, the production of consonant-vowel syllables, typically emerges around 6 to 9 months. These early vocalizations form the foundation for future language acquisition and pave the way for the emergence of meaningful speech.

Preverbal Communication:

Between 9 and 18 months, children engage in preverbal communication, where they use gestures, vocalizations, and nonverbal cues to express their needs and intentions. This stage is crucial for developing joint attention and establishing early communication patterns with caregivers. Preverbal communication sets the stage for later language development, promoting vocabulary acquisition and understanding of social cues.

First Words and Vocabulary Growth:

Around the age of 12 to 18 months, children begin to produce their first recognizable words. Initially, children's vocabulary consists of a limited number of words, often referring to objects or people with high salience in their immediate environment. The vocabulary spurt occurs between 18 and 24 months, where children rapidly acquire new words, expanding their expressive and receptive language abilities.

Telegraphic Speech and Grammar Development:

Between the ages of 2 and 3, children enter the telegraphic stage of speech development. During this phase, children start combining words to form short sentences, usually consisting of two or three words. While grammatical errors are common at this stage, children begin to acquire basic syntax and morphological rules. They demonstrate an understanding of word order, plurals, possessives, and verb tenses, gradually refining their grammatical skills.

Complex Sentences and Language Fluency:

From the age of 3 to 5, children's speech becomes increasingly complex as they acquire more sophisticated grammatical structures and expand their vocabulary. They begin to use conjunctions, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions, allowing for more detailed and coherent expression. By the age of 5, children usually exhibit near-adult-like language fluency and can engage in conversations with peers and adults.

Factors Influencing Speech Development:

Several factors influence children's speech development. Environmental factors, such as exposure to rich language input and interaction, play a significant role in language acquisition. Socio-economic status, parental education, and cultural practices can also impact speech development. Additionally, individual differences in cognitive abilities, hearing, and speech motor skills may affect the progression of language acquisition.

Methods. To conduct this analysis, a comprehensive literature review was performed, including studies published in peer-reviewed journals, books, and relevant educational resources. The selected studies covered a wide range of topics related to children's speech

development, including phonological, lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic aspects. The findings from these studies were synthesized to identify the key stages of speech development and the factors that influence each stage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Prelinguistic Stage:

- Coos and babbles: During the first few months of life, infants produce vowel-like sounds, known as cooing, and repetitive consonant-vowel combinations, known as babbling.
- Canonical babbling: Around 6 to 10 months, infants produce more complex babbling, incorporating syllable-like structures, such as "mama" or "dada."

2. Holophrastic Stage:

- First words: Between 10 to 14 months, children begin producing their first meaningful words, typically consisting of objects or people in their immediate environment.
- Vocabulary expansion: Throughout the second year of life, children rapidly expand their vocabulary, acquiring new words at an astonishing rate.

3. Two-Word Stage:

- Telegraphic speech: Around 18 to 24 months, children start combining two words to form simple phrases. These phrases often omit certain grammatical elements but convey meaning effectively.

4. Early Multiword Stage:

- Grammatical development: Between 2 to 3 years, children gradually acquire grammatical rules and begin forming more complex sentences.
- Sentence expansion: Children develop the ability to generate longer and more detailed sentences, expressing their thoughts and ideas more effectively.

5. Preschool Stage:

- Conversational skills: During the preschool years, children refine their speech skills, including turn-taking, topic maintenance, and conversational repair strategies.
- Pragmatic development: They learn to adjust their speech according to social contexts, demonstrating an understanding of politeness, humor, and narrative structure.

CONCLUSION

The main stages of children's speech development play a crucial role in their overall cognitive and linguistic growth. From the early babbling and cooing sounds to the sophisticated language skills exhibited during adolescence, this journey of speech acquisition is a remarkable process that reflects the intricate interplay between biological, environmental, and social factors.

During the prelinguistic stage, infants engage in vocalizations and experimentation with sounds, laying the foundation for future language development. The cooing and babbling sounds gradually evolve into meaningful utterances, leading to the emergence of their first words during the one-word stage. This significant milestone marks the transition from prelinguistic to linguistic communication and opens the gateway to expanding vocabulary and syntactic complexity.

As children progress through the telegraphic stage, they begin to combine words and produce short phrases, demonstrating an understanding of basic grammar rules. Their vocabulary rapidly expands, allowing for more elaborate expressions and an increasing ability to convey thoughts and emotions. The development of syntax and morphology continues to



refine during the later stages, leading to the acquisition of complex sentence structures and the ability to convey abstract concepts.

Throughout this journey, children's language development is influenced by various factors, including parental input, socio-cultural environment, and individual differences in cognitive abilities. The importance of early exposure to language-rich environments, positive parental interaction, and engaging stimuli cannot be overstated, as they contribute to the expansion and refinement of linguistic skills.

Moreover, the role of educational interventions and speech-language therapy should not be overlooked. These interventions can provide targeted support to children with speech and language difficulties, helping them overcome challenges and reach their full linguistic potential.

Understanding the main stages of children's speech development is crucial for parents, educators, and clinicians alike. By recognizing the typical milestones and potential red flags, stakeholders can promote early identification of language delays or disorders and facilitate timely intervention.

However, it is important to acknowledge that speech development is a dynamic process, and individual variations exist. Some children may exhibit accelerated or delayed milestones, but as long as progress is being made within a reasonable range, it is generally considered within the normal range of development. Early identification and intervention are key to addressing any concerns and providing appropriate support.

In conclusion, the main stages of children's speech development encompass a fascinating journey from prelinguistic vocalizations to fluent and complex language production. By understanding these stages and the factors that influence them, we can foster an environment that optimizes children's linguistic growth and sets them on a path towards effective communication and successful academic and social integration.

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