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Oral language development and the preschool child

Margery Ruffalo

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ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
AND THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

by

Margery Buffalo

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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This research paper has been
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Verbal communication is a combination of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.¹ These different aspects of language are not only interrelated, but are also interdependent. Children readily learn words that are familiar to them as compared to words that are vague or simply unknown. Words that are not understood when spoken will not be understood when written. Durkin says that the reading comprehension problems of many children are really symptoms of more basic deficiencies in language comprehension. "If children are going to learn to read, they have to learn to talk."²

Weaver and Kingston quote Robinson as saying that the extent to which the child uses the language with which he reads is basic to reading success.³ Evidence of this close inter-relationship between language abilities and achievement in reading have been shown by studies such as Loban's intensive and extended longitudinal study of language used by children from kindergarten through grade nine. One of his conclusions,

¹Dolores Durkin, Teaching Young Children to Read, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972), p. 66.

²Ibid.

³Wendell W. Weaver, Albert J. Kingston, "Modeling the Effects of Oral Language Upon Reading Language," Reading Research Quarterly VII (Summer 1972): 613.

as quoted by Smith, was: "Those who are high in general language ability are also high in reading abilities. Those who are low in general language ability are also low in reading ability."⁴ Strickland's study of the language of elementary school children also indicated a close relationship between general language and reading ability. These and many other studies conducted on the child in school have indicated a close relationship between reading and language skills.⁵

Since this correlation does exist, it is logical to take a step back from the elementary school-aged child and look at the preschool child and infant and his early language development. The study of early language development tries to account for the evolution from meaningless cooing, gurgling, and babbling sounds made by the infant to the meaningful language spoken by the adult. This field becomes important to reading teachers since many reading authorities maintain that competence in spoken language is an essential first step in learning to read. Essentially, reading and early language serve the same purpose of communication. Both use the same kinds of sentences in which the words are arranged in the same order or orders. The oral language abilities

⁴Nila Banton Smith, "Early Language Development: Foundation of Reading," Elementary English 52 (March 1975): 400.

⁵Ibid., pp. 401-402.

a preschooler brings to school with him set the foundation on which the teacher of beginning reading helps the child build his reading skills.

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this paper was to investigate current literature which discusses the oral language development of the infant and preschool child as setting the foundation for the next step of learning to read.

Scope and Limitation

The researcher reviewed literature which investigated oral language development of infants and preschool children as setting a foundation for the next step of reading. This research includes the normal acquisition of language in children and theories of oral language learning. Current studies on the mother-child relationship in oral language are also reviewed. This paper includes a summary and bibliography for parents of preschool children on the promotion of sound oral language development.

This research paper deals in only one factor that will help a program in beginning reading be successful. It does not mean to say that understanding spoken language is the only necessity for a child to become a successful reader. It is a very important objective of reading readiness and must be considered along with other objectives such as

abilities in visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, and listening comprehension. There are also other factors that may affect the readiness a child possesses for reading, such as his physical maturation, emotional development, and mental age.

This research paper deals with the acquisition of normal oral language and not language development that is affected by mental retardation, neurological disorders, hearing loss, or other medical conditions. Also, environmental factors such as bilingual home, institutions, and the economic and social status of the child are not the concern of this paper. Lastly, studies on sex differences and language acquisition have not been reviewed by the researcher.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Introduction

Considering how much there is to learn, it is amazing how quickly children learn to speak. Wanat quotes Chomsky as saying that language acquisition is a process in which the child formulates a theory of the structure of his language. Some of the skills which underlie language development are: the mental ability to deal with the world, the ability to remember things, the ability to break down the language one hears into units of sound and units of meaning and recombine these units, and the ability to generalize.¹

A baby spends much time during his first years listening to adults talk. At first he babbles all the sounds of all the languages of the world. By six months he is babbling only the sounds of the language of the society in which he lives. When a child sets out to learn his first language he has to learn what the important sounds of the language are and how they may be combined to make words. He learns the sounds needed to make native words and puts aside the ability to make sounds that are not needed. Most of the sound system

¹Stanley Wanat, "Language Acquisition: Basic Issues," The Reading Teacher 25 (November 1971): 143.

of English is learned during the first three years, but children in kindergarten or first grade often have a sound or two they cannot yet produce correctly although they recognize the differences.² After the child discovers the sound system of the language, he discovers the grammar. The grammar is usually divided into morphology and syntax.³ Morphology has to do with the smallest unit of meaning, the morpheme. A word like "car" has one morpheme whereas the word "outside" has two morphemes. As a child learns a language, he may learn only one morpheme for the meaning of a two-morpheme word. He may say the morpheme "side" for the whole word of "outside". The English language does not rely heavily on special word endings, or morphology, to get across its meanings. Instead, the burden of the message is carried by the way in which words are arranged into sentences, or the syntax. By the time a child is four years old, he will learn the sounds and grammatical system of his language without knowing the names of letters, adjectives, subjects, predicates, and so on.

Developmental Stages of Oral Language

According to Gesell, "spoken language appears first as a relatively independent activity, engaged in as play for its

²Jean Berko Gleason, "Language Development in Early Childhood," in Oral Language and Reading, ed: James Walden (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1969), p. 17.

³Ibid. p. 18.

own sake, as an accompaniment to other types of behavior or as a social response without a specific communicative aspect."⁴ He also states that "a child's linguistic and intellectual acculturation is limited at every turn by maturational factors. The manner and the order in which a child acquires speech reflects stages and patterns of neuromuscular maturity."⁵ Gesell's observations show that the utterances of a child of four weeks are small throaty sounds outside the sounds of crying. At eight weeks he vocalizes single vowel sounds as "ah", "eh", and "uh". When the child is twelve weeks old he can chuckle and at sixteen weeks, he laughs. Normal children at twenty weeks make squesling sounds. By twenty-eight weeks, or six to seven months, the child usually is capable of making polysyllabic vowel sounds and a consonantal m-m-m. By the first year he imitates sounds and has a word or two in his vocabulary.⁶

Smith makes similar observations in the child during what she calls the "Cooing Stage", birth to two months, and the "Babbling Stage", two to ten months.⁷ During the Cooing Stage

⁴Arnold Gesell et al., The First Five Years of Life (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1940), p. 190.

⁵Arnold Gesell, Infant Development (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 59.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Nila Banton Smith, "Early Language Development: Foundation of Reading," Elementary English 51 (March 1975): 399.

babies play with their vocal apparatus and sounds in general indicate the child's state of being comfortable, uncomfortable, hungry, in pain, satisfied, happy and so on. Transition from cooing to babbling is marked by an increase in the control over vocal production and therefore an increase in the amount of verbalization. The Babbling Period consists of consonant-vowel links as "da-da", "goo-goo" and "ma-ma". These are usually repeated over and over by the baby. By nine months, intonation and inflections appear in their verbalizations and the baby can produce all the sounds that are significant in the language of his society.

At one year, the child reaches in his verbal development the "First Stage of Comprehensible Speech" in Smith's terminology or as Gesell calls it, "The Jargon Stage." "Vocalization increases in the variety of sounds used, and in inflections, until it takes on a conversational character so strongly marked that the child almost seems to be carrying on a long meaningful conversation in some foreign language."⁸ This jargon has all the sounds of the language spoken by those around the child. It accompanies the play of the child, or is the play, or it may be seriously directed to others without their understanding the child's meaning. This verbalization peaks between fifteen to eighteen months and

⁸ Gesell The First Five Years of Life, p. 191.

is usually abandoned by two years. The communication needs of the child are met by gestures and expressive vocalization rather than this jargon. It is during this stage that the first sound unit is produced with a specific meaning.

The appearance of first words does not mean a rapid increase in vocabulary. The tendency is to drop in the rate of acquisition between fifteen to eighteen months of age and then to have a rapid acceleration thereafter. The vocabulary at this stage may be from three words to 100 or more single words.⁹

Toward eighteen months two-word combinations and two-syllabled words are met. Spoken words are used instead of the jargon in language play and social responses, but verbal behavior is usually accompanied by gestures and activities. Miller quotes Brown and Frazer who have characterized the first two- to three-word sentences as "telegraphic speech".¹⁰ Brown claims children will use words at this stage that fall into two classes, open class and pivot class. Open class have words that can stand alone in meaning as "hot", "milk", and "shoe". Pivot words are those which can never be spoken alone but are joined to an open word. These would include "hot", "my", and "big". Children will say "big dog" or "dog big",

⁹Gesell The First Five Years of Life p. 191.

¹⁰Wick Miller, "Language Acquisition and Reading," in Cral Language and Reading, ed: James Walden (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1969), p. 34.

but never "big hot" or "hot my". Thus a child at this stage is already using correct grammatical structure.

The following are samples of phrases and sentences obtained from mothers with children in this age group. The mothers in Gesell's normative group were asked for examples of the longest combinations they heard. The phrases show the range from the simplest to the most complex combinations of words said by children at this stage.¹¹

See that.

Who is that?

Drink of water.

Open door.

I do it.

Gimme cracker.

Telegraphic speech gives way to a period of rapid development at about two and one-half years of age. During this period of transition, longer and more varied combinations of one-word sentences and short combinations are found. The interesting jargon of the one-year-old drops completely out. Compound and complex sentences and even sentences with brief subordinate phrases are heard toward three years but occasionally will be heard at two years. Pronouns are used, often correctly. Talking is still accompanied by actions and may be a play activity. It will also be a means of communication not only of wants, such as food and toilet needs, but also of ideas and

¹¹Gesell The First Five Years of Life, p. 197.

other information. The child now tells what he sees and what has happened to him.

Gesell observed that the first words a child learns are the names of objects and then the names of simple verbs of action. The most conspicuous development at this stage is the common use of pronouns, especially in the first and second person as "I", "me", and "you". The child in this stage will be found saying "Me mama." "My" and "mine" will come before other possessives. Some children will use plurals and past tense but not the majority. Here is an example of the range of sentences from twenty-four month old children. The sentences were reported by mothers from Gesell's normative group and are ranged from the simplest to the most complex sentences given.¹²

Papa gone.

I see Daddy.

Where's Daddy gone?

I want my cup.

Shut that door.

Where's the ball, Mamma?

I put it on the chair.

Take 'em and put 'em in there.

Don't forget the 'nanas.

Baby sat in my lap.

Gesell observed language at three years to be extensive with long sentences that include compound and complex structures. The tense, moods, and parts of speech of a sentence are used, but often incorrectly. Generalizations are common both in

¹²Ibid.

talking and in the comprehension of the speech of others. Non-present situations can be dealt with verbally.¹³

The language of the four-year-old is described by Gesell as the flowering period of language. "The four-year-old talks-- talks about everything, plays with words, questions..."¹⁴ There will be anecdotes and reminiscences suggested by minor details of a conversation.

Growth continues at a tremendous pace beyond age four. By age five and six, language abilities are almost to an adult level. Vocabulary is extensive and all sentence patterns used by adults are used at this age.

Theories Behind Developmental Language

In an article by Butler, Cazden was quoted as saying,

Language is knowledge in our heads; speech is the realization of that knowledge in behavior. Language consists of all the words in a person's mental dictionary and all the rules at his (usually unconscious) command for combining those words into an infinite number of novel sentences and for interpreting the equally novel sentences that he hears. Speech, by contrast, consists of his actual utterances spoken to particular people in particular situations.¹⁵

Many persons have observed how quickly children acquire native language. Gesell, in the previous section of this

¹³Ibid. p. 202-203.

¹⁴Ibid. p. 204.

¹⁵Lester G. Butler, Language Acquisition of Young Children: Major Theories and Sequences (Bethesda, MD.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 094 403, 1973), p. 1.

chapter, was quoted as noting that the normal four-year-old child is able to use adult-like speech. Many people interested in early language development wonder how children learn to speak and what prompts young children's interest in communicating.

A first attempt at answering the questions how and why children learn a language would be that children imitate what they hear their parents say, or that parents teach them by telling them when they have made a mistake. Parents often approve or disapprove of what their children say, but they seldom carry on a teaching program of scheduled reinforcements and denials to teach their language. Perhaps parental speech to the child becomes needed attention that prompts the child to speak. This may encourage the first speech of the child but it probably will not be the reason the child chooses to speak grammatically in later years.

Another possibility is that children talk because they need to communicate their needs to others. This is called the communication pressure hypothesis.¹⁶ This hypothesis cannot be the answer since a mother will satisfy a child's needs as soon as the need is understood. The mother will not usually wait until the child has voiced his need in a grammatically correct sentence so there would be no motivation for the child to speak in a more complex form. The child who

¹⁶Phillip S. Dale, Language Development Structure and Function(Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press Inc., 1972), p. 112.

says "mi" for milk will in later months say "I want milk." even though "mi" would have satisfied the child's needs. If acquisition of a word is long overdue, a parent may try to teach the word, but usually the child produces the more complex utterances before the parent disapproves of the more primitive forms.

Another possible reason children learn to speak is for communication satisfaction.¹⁷ It is reinforcing for a child to understand other people talking and to make himself understood. Dale feels this hypothesis lacks an explanation as to how a child knows when he has understood another person or when he has been understood.¹⁸

The three major theories of language acquisition try to provide answers but nobody really knows for sure how or why children learn their language. The theories are similar in that each is a serious attempt to describe how children acquire language. They differ in respect to the role of inheritance, imitation, reinforcement, experience and the child himself in the acquisition process.¹⁹ The three theories that will be discussed are the Behaviorist Theory, the Nativist Theory and the Cognitive Theory. Controversial

¹⁷Ibid. p. 113.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Butler, Language Acquisition of Young Children: Major Theories and Sequences, p. 2.

issues for and against these theories will also be discussed.

Behaviorist Theory

According to the Behaviorist Theory, language learning is similar to the learning that is observed to take place in lab animals. When children engage in speech behavior which is acceptable to the community in which they live and which serves the desired communicative functions, the children are reinforced in some way. When they engage in inappropriate speech behavior, they receive negative reinforcement, either in the form of absence of positive reinforcement or in the form of punishment. In other words, the Behaviorist Theory is based on rewarding the child when he imitates or tries to imitate models of adult language. The fact that children do learn their language through imitation of models can easily be verified since children learn the language which is around them. Japanese children learn Japanese and Italian children learn Italian. Additional evidence is shown in observations of children repeating or "parrotting" words and expressions used by those around them. Wardhaugh quotes Staats-Staats as saying "this theory involves the learning of a finite set of responses according to certain probabilities of occurrence."²⁰ Jenkins and Palermo propose that the child learns the stimulus

²⁰Ronald Wardhaugh, "Theories of Language Acquisition in Relation to Beginning Reading Instruction," Reading Research Quarterly VII (Fall 1971): 173.

and response equivalences that can occur in the frames of a phrase-structure grammar. They heavily emphasize imitation as a force in establishing bonds between stimuli and responses and they claim that the child generalizes to form classes of responses. They do not explain how control of such classes allows the child to construct longer sentences.²¹

Nativist Theory

People in support of the Nativistic Theory claim that language is innate. Babbling is the result of some innate drive since it occurs even in congenitally deaf babies. The development of language is determined from within the child rather than by external factors such as imitation or training. Evidence in support of this theory shows:

1. Man among all species on earth has the necessary anatomic and physiological features to engage in sustained speech activities. Also, language cannot be taught to non-human forms of life.
2. Some animals have high intelligence like apes, or have a means of communication as bees and dolphins but they cannot learn human language, even with a tutor, while a young child can learn without formal training.
3. It is almost impossible to suppress language acquisition among humans, even in the blind, deaf, retarded, and neglected.
4. Although the pace may vary, the sequence of language development appears to be the same for all people. It is not affected by cultural or linguistic variations.

²¹Ibid.

5. There are certain characteristics that exist in all languages in the world. All languages are based on the same universal principals of semantics, syntax, and phonology. Each language has words for relations, objectives, feelings, and qualities and any human can learn any language in the world.²²

All languages distinguish syntactically among nouns, verbs, and adjectives, although they differ in other respects, such as inflections. All languages possess grammatical relations such as subjects of the sentence and objects of the verb. Since all languages have certain characteristics in common, Nativists say this shows the existence of a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which develops in all children at a certain age. Wardhaugh quotes McNeill who claims that the child must acquire a generative-transformational grammar.²³ To acquire such a grammar from the numerous utterances the LAD is exposed to, the child must possess certain innate abilities. According to McNeill the innate properties of the LAD are:

1. Ability to distinguish speech sounds from other sounds in the environment.
2. The ability to organize linguistic events into various classes which can later be redefined. Allows for development of phonological and syntactic systems.
3. Knowledge that only a certain kind of linguistic system is possible and that other kinds are not.

²²Butler, Language Acquisition of Young Children: Major Theories and Sequences, p. 5-6.

²³Wardhaugh, "Theories of Language Acquisition in Relation to Beginning Reading Instruction," p. 176.

4. The ability to engage in constant evaluation of the developing linguistic system so as to construct the simplest possible system out of the linguistic data that are encountered.²⁴

Lenneberg emphasizes the development of the organism's capacities and shows how these mature along a fairly fixed schedule as quoted by Wardhaugh.

Language emerges during this maturational process when anatomical, physiological, motor, neural and cognitive development allows it to emerge. Every child must learn the specific details of the language of his community, but the ability to learn language is innate and part of the biological endowment of the organism.²⁵

Cairns and Silva argue that language acquisition is determined and constrained by genetically determined, biological factors other than the obvious ones such as the anatomy and physiology of the vocal tract and the auditory mechanism. They are concerned in higher level cognitive processes. These biological constraints favor the belief that the capacity for language acquisition is innate. Biological factors that show language as innate are:

1. Language acquisition is limited to the human species.
2. The course of language acquisition show characteristics typical of the maturation of genetically determined processes, such as walking. (In other words, learning a language is a maturational process since it shows traits which are also common to other learned processes.)

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p. 175.

3. There appear to be definite age limits, beyond which language acquisition cannot take place. There is evidence from various pathological conditions and the mode of recovery from them that there is both a too early and a too late age for language acquisition.
4. There is the existence of a highly regular sequence of milestones in language acquisition, even in the presence of gross abnormalities such as feeble-mindedness and mongoloidism.
5. The maturation of linguistic capacity seems to be closely correlated with physical maturation and the development of other skills and capacities.²⁶

According to proponents of the Nativist Theory, language is innate and development is determined from within the child rather than by external factors such as imitation or training.

Cognitive Theory

The Cognitive Theory states that children are born with abilities but Cognitive Theorists disagree with Nativists as to what these abilities are.

It is hypothesized that young children learn their language through a series of hypothesis and tests in which the children develop their own theory of how the language works. As children observe the ongoing language of others, they look for regularities in it such that they can formulate a tentative "rule" or generalization about how it works, then they produce language using these "rules". As new evidence is obtained the rules are modified to more nearly fit their observation.²⁷

One reason researchers and theorists believe that children

²⁶ Charles Cairns and Dolores Silva, How Children Learn Language (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 038 401, 1969), p. 10-18.

²⁷ Butler, Language Acquisition of Young Children: Major Theories and Sequences, p. 6.

have rules is because of certain errors they make, such as "I digged a hole for the mouses." seems to indicate that the child knows how to make the plurals of nouns but has overgeneralized this rule to irregular words. The child also knows how to make the past tense of verbs but was confused by the irregular forms.

Wardhaugh quotes Slobin as saying, "It seems to me that the child is born not with a set of linguistic categories but with some sort of process mechanism-- a set of procedures and inference rules if you will--- that he uses to process linguistic data."²⁸ He regards language acquisition as an active process in which certain abilities of the child develop. These abilities are:

1. Ability to segment utterances into sounds and meanings and then to combine and recombine these segments.
2. Ability to isolate meaning units.
3. Ability to make wide generalizations before attempting to accomodate exceptions.²⁹

Slobin and other cognitive theorists differ from the behaviorists in that they regard the human learner as an active participant in learning rather than as a relatively passive reactor to external stimuli.

The theories of language acquisition make a serious

²⁸ Wardhaugh, "Theories of Language Acquisition in Relation to Beginning Reading," p. 176.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 177.

attempt to describe how children learn their language. The Behaviorist Theory sees children as learning their language through imitation. The imitation of models that the child hears, the frequency with which he hears these models, the positive and negative reinforcement of acceptable and non-acceptable verbal behavior are key concepts in this theory. The Nativist Theory sees language development as an innate drive in each human being. Language development is related to the growth of the human brain. Maturation in language parallels maturation in motor development and thinking skills. A problem with the Nativist Theory is that it does not explain the leap from the child's innate knowledge to his actual language performance. The third major theory, the Cognitive Theory, postulates that, the child is born with the ability to develop his own "theory" of how his language works. He observes the ongoing language, looking for generalizations, formulating rules, and modifying the rules to fit these observations.

Controversial Issues

It was stated earlier in this paper that these theories differ in the role of inheritance, imitation, reinforcement, experience, and the child himself. These and other controversial issues concerning these theories will be presented.

The frequency of the stimuli is an important proponent in any behavioristic theory of learning. If language is learned solely through imitation, then the most frequently occurring

words and structures in the language should be learned first. Telegraphic speech omits frequent words and uses the most important words. If children were learning the stimulus that was present most frequent, then it follows that the first words they would learn would be the most frequently used words in the English language. They would learn words like "a" and "the" first, instead of the more traditional first words of "mama" and "bye". Studies showing that parents' conversation to their infants is different from normal conversation with adults could account for this discrepancy in the Behaviorist Theory. At present, no research studies have confirmed this. Wardhaugh quotes McNeill who argues that the structure of language and of the child's mind controls the learning, whereas Slobin as quoted by Wardhaugh, argues that the child's cognitive and mental capacities at each stage regulate his ability to learn.³⁰ They agree that frequency of stimuli is of little importance in acquisition of language.

Another key issue in the Behaviorist Theory is the role that imitation plays in language acquisition. Evidence shows that children do imitate but not indiscriminately. Babies do not imitate but do respond to sounds. Wardhaugh quotes Menyuk as stating that the ability to imitate depends on the acquisition of some prior ability, since children give

³⁰Wardhaugh, "Theories of Language Acquisition in Relation to Beginning Reading Instruction," p. 180-181.

evidence of various difficulties in imitating utterances.³¹
The child's ability to imitate is limited by his short-term memory span. The task of memorizing all of the possible language structures and associating with each structure a particular conceptualization is impossible. Children utter some expressions which they would probably never hear anyone say, especially an adult. "Grampa, higher the swing, my feet are dragging." is an example of such an expression.³²

Butler quotes Berko who, in conversation with her four-year-old child, showed that a child's language is highly resistant to alteration by adult intervention.

Child: "My teacher holded the baby rabbits and we patted them."

Gleason: "Did you say your teacher held the baby rabbits?"

Child: "Yes"

Gleason: "What did you say she did?"

Child: "She holded the baby rabbits and we patted them."

Gleason: "Did you say she held them tightly?"

Child: "No, she holded them loosely."³³

The child heard and comprehended the adult form, but would not conform to it.

Butler also quotes McNeill who observed a similar situation where an intensive effort was made to modify the child's speech but it was only slightly modified.

Child: "Nobody don't like me."

³¹Ibid. p. 181.

³²Butler, Language Acquisition of Young Children: Major Theories and Sequences, p. 4.

³³Ibid.

Mother: "No, say 'Nobody likes me'."

Child: "Nobody don't like me."

Mother: "No. Now listen carefully: say 'Nobody likes me'."

Child: "Oh! Nobody don't likes me."³⁴

Since much of the speech to which the child is exposed is fragmented, and because of examples such as have been given above, imitation cannot be relied on solely in any theory of language acquisition. Direct imitation occurs in small amounts, although the child must filter out poor examples in forming his grammar, which becomes a difficult task. The Behaviorist Theory also contends that language is learned because of a reinforcement schedule but "it is obvious that parents, siblings and others in the child's environment may react in widely varying and unsystematic ways, and yet the child still acquires a grammar of his dialect."³⁵

Behaviorists argue that language learning is similar to the stimulus-response learning that is observed to take place in lab animals. Nativists argue that there is more to this than an animal-type training since humans are the only animals who are capable of learning a language like English. Some animals possess mechanisms, such as high intelligence and means of communication, similar to the human ones, yet they do not speak. Therefore, language must be innate. Behaviorists

³⁴Ibid. p. 4-5.

³⁵Cairns and Silva, "How Children Learn Language," p. 7-8.

contend that humans are different and unique because of their peripheral, perceptual and/or sound producing mechanisms.³⁶

Nativists claim that linguistic universals show the existence of a LAD which develops in all children at a certain age. Cairns and Silva argue that maybe this shows that all languages stem from the "first" language.³⁷ Other people have argued that universals across different languages occur because there are universals in the subjects people think about and want to talk about.

Wardhaugh points out that studies on language acquisition focus on phonology and syntax and ignore meaning.³⁸ Slobin feels that the emergence of syntactic categories depends on their relative semantic difficulty rather than on their grammatical complexity. Semantic complexity rather than grammatical difficulty determines the developmental sequence.³⁹ Bloom feels, "Just describing children's speech in terms of the length of their utterances, their developing milestones, ignores the process of change within a milestone."⁴⁰ Within

³⁶Ibid. p. 5.

³⁷Ibid. p. 6.

³⁸Wardhaugh, "Theories of Language Acquisition in Relation to Beginning Reading Instruction." p. 184.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Eleanor DiMichael and Gavin O'Connor, ed., A Special Study Institute on Oral Language Skills Antecedent to Reading (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 083 761, 1973), p. 34.

a particular milestone there are enormous differences and variations that are important for explaining progress.

Description of sentences in terms of the adult model has two shortcomings, according to Bloom.⁴¹ The criteria of productivity are essentially ignored when one takes an utterance in a child's speech and compares it with an utterance in adult speech. Further explanations maybe elicited from the adult as to the utterance's meaning, but not from children. The utterance "no truck" has a variety of meanings. "There is no truck here," "I don't want a truck," and "It's not a truck, it's something else," would be a few examples. "Single occurrence of a structure is not enough evidence for saying that the child does indeed have knowledge of that structure in his underlying rule system unless you look for repeated occurrences of a particular structure in different situations."⁴²

The second shortcoming is that the child's utterances need support of what is going on around him and the adult does not. Research began to go beyond and come up with an account of what the child knows. Once research starts looking at the form of children's speech, it will have to look at what children know about the world. Through research by Chomsky and others, it became clear that language has a mapping or a

⁴¹Ibid. p. 34-35.

⁴²Ibid. p. 34.

coding of an individual's representation of events in the world. What the individual understood about the objects, events, and relations in the world around him determines what he knows about language.⁴³

The "no truck" example given earlier shows that a child is aware of more types of meaning relationships than he can reveal through linguistic devices he controls. Further research could deal with the acquisition of language and the child's abstract thinking.

To answer the question why children learn to speak is not an easy task and in reality nobody really knows. The Nativists may have the right start in saying that language is an innate desire of all humans. The Behaviorists have reasons to believe children learn to speak through imitation and reinforcement, although there is ample evidence that this is not the total answer. The followers of the Cognitive Theory have shown through their observations that the child's acquisition of language does not stop at these two theories but continues in a quest to discover the rules and regularities of the language. Lastly, a theory that answers the questions how and why children learn to speak must take into consideration not only the learning of syntax but also the understanding of meaning.

⁴³Ibid. p. 37.

Communication Network Between Mother and Child

Despite any innate capacity for language, children must hear a language in order to learn to speak it. Most of what they hear is the speech of their primary caretaker, who is usually the mother or another adult. The child formulates its first linguistic rules on the basis of how he comprehends his mother's speech.

Bever, Podor, and Weschsel point out that adult speech is notable for its false starts, rambling style and loose adherence to the grammatical rules set forth for the written form of English. Bever et al., Chomsky, and McNeill have noted that adult speech would provide a difficult language model for a child to formulate its grammatical rules on.⁴⁴

Anyone interested in oral language acquisition would also be interested in the role adults play in a child's ability to learn the language. Is the child's oral language influenced by the mother's or other adult's speech? Does the child's speech influence the mother's speech in any way? How do verbal exchanges between mother and child differ from verbal exchanges between mothers and other adults? Do mothers talk in grammatically correct sentences to their children or is their speech lowered to a so-called "child's level?" Lastly, if a child's oral language is influenced by verbal exchanges, what affect will a language program or techniques of language development have on language acquisition?

⁴⁴Helen Remick, Maternal Speech to Children During Language Acquisition (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 072 863, 1973), p. 2.

Recently published research studies have tried to answer these questions concerning the communication network between mother and child.

Child Speech Influenced by or Influences Mother's Speech

Condon and Sander, researchers at Boston University Medical Center, have reported that infant movements are synchronized with the adult's speech.⁴⁵ They detected these patterns by taking sound films of infants and adult interactions, then analyzing the frames. The movement of the less than two-day-old infants tended to change direction and speed at those points marking segments in the adult speech. Chinese presented to American infants produced the same results but disconnected vowel and tapping sounds failed to show the correspondence with movement that natural speech did. Through this observation it would seem that newborn infants are not only influenced by the speech of humans but are also able to differentiate human speech from other sounds.

Lewis and Freedle observed eighty infants and their mothers at home and recorded the behavior data.⁴⁶ Behavior was recorded, using a checklist, for ten second intervals for

⁴⁵Patrice Horn, "Babies Respond to Adult Talk Long Before They Speak," Psychology Today 7 (April 1974): 28.

⁴⁶Michael Lewis and Roy Freedle, Mother-Infant Dyad: The Cradle of Meaning (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 067 149, 1972), p. 1.

a total observation time of two hours. Boys and girls of two racial groups as well as from the entire socioeconomic spectrum were included. Data were analyzed by determining the frequency of distribution in infant vocalizations, the simultaneous behavior within a ten-second unit by mother and child, and by determining a directional interaction analysis or an analysis as to who initiated the responses. The results showed:

...the general communication network made up of the infant and its mother is more than just the vocalizations of each. Thus, a mother's smile may follow or a mother's look may precede an infant's vocalization. Likewise, an infant's smile may follow or an infant's cry may precede a mother's vocalization. The network is a complex web wherein the repertoire of each member actively interacts with the others.⁴⁷

Lewis and Freedle's study points to a close verbal interaction between mother and child. One influences the other to verbalize and that verbalization in turn prompts another resulting in a complex web of verbal speech. Ringler and Jarvella's study, also along these lines, tries to answer these questions:

1. Does nursery language used with the child change after he begins to talk?

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 28.

2. Is there reason to believe that the child's speech is influenced by or influences the mother's language?⁴⁸

The subjects of the study were ten lower class black mothers, speaker of urban language, and their children. The children were all born during the summer of 1970. The verbal and nonverbal behavior of each mother-child pair was observed for a total of ten hours between 1970 and 1974 by means of written transcriptions of dialogue, tape-recorded interviews and written descriptions of behavior. This study showed that the parents were influenced by the child. As the child increases in age, sentences to him are more correct and there is greater use of the noun-verb-object form. Parent's general speech seemed influenced by the child's speech by a decrease in concreteness. As the child grew in age and verbal ability, the mother changed her speech patterns to meet the needs of the child. From these last two studies of Lewis-Freedle and Ringler-Jarvella, it appears that the child can influence the mother not only to speak but also can influence her use of language.

Mother's Language to Child Versus Mother's Language to Adult

If the child does cause some influence on the mother's speech, does this mean that mother-to-child speech differs

⁴⁸ Norma Ringler and Robert Jarvella, A Longitudinal Study of Mothers' Language (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 100 160, 1974), p. 1.

from mother-to-adult speech? Remick presented a study to determine whether or not mother-to-adult and mother-to-child speech differ and what these differences are.⁴⁹ In this study eight well-educated mothers were tape-recorded talking to their daughters of ages sixteen to thirty months.

It was found that the mother's speech differed significantly from that to another adult. The mothers used a more restricted vocabulary to their daughters, used pronouns differentially, spoke in distinct clausal units similar to written sentences, spoke in a higher median fundamental frequency, restricted their verb tense usage and talked mostly about the child. The speech to the children appeared to be a simple, more grammatically "correct" version of English than that spoken to adults.⁵⁰

The mothers seemed to be engaging in direct tutelage of their children much of the time.

Results of the Ringler-Jarvella study presented earlier of lower-class black mothers and their children, suggested that the mother's speech of children is much different from mother-to-adult speech. It is less complex and less grammatically correct. Nursery language used with the child becomes varied and less concrete as the child learns to talk. Speech to the child grew more grammatically correct as the child grew older. This suggested an increase in parental

⁴⁹Remick, Maternal Speech to Children During Language Acquisition, p. 1. 21.

⁵⁰Ibid. p. 1.

sensitivity to the need for English sentences to be learned overtly as first and the need to model correct base form to the beginning language learner.⁵¹ This writer believes that both studies had mothers who were interested in the language development of their child. The mothers of the Ringler-Jarvella study may have been influenced in this direction by the adult-to-mother conferences they had. Results showed that an increase in the richness of vocabulary during the adult-to-adult speech paralleled an increase of vocabulary in the mother-to-child speech.⁵²

In looking at her results, Remick points out that care must be taken in generalizing the results of her study. It may be that only first-born or well-spaced children in middle- and upper-class nuclear families interact so intensively with their mothers. In a 1973 study Remick found changes in speech by middle-class Mexican mothers that were similar to the results reported here. On the other hand, Slobin reported on American Ghetto Black mothers and Remick reported on Mexican-Indio mothers as being uncomfortable talking individually to their children. These children have as much language socialization by other children as their mothers and little

⁵¹Ringler and Jarvella, A Longitudinal Study of Mothers' Language, p. 6.

⁵²Ibid. p. 8.

is in the nature of directed tutelage.⁵³

The writer of this paper submits that better observations of mother's speech to children could be made away from a laboratory setting and back in the home. In a study similar to the Lewis-Freedle setting, mother-to-child speech could be recorded without the mothers being influenced by a lab setting or adult conferences. Otherwise, this writer would question whether the child influences the mother to speak in a certain form or whether it is a matter of motherly love and desire to help their children progress.

In most or all cases, normal children of any socioeconomic group would learn the language of their community. A comparison study of low, middle, and upper-class families who have intensive verbal interaction with their child to that of low, middle, and upper-class families who do not, may add insight concerning the importance of verbal interaction in language acquisition. Also, if language development is affected in a positive way by early and intensive verbal interactions, will this in turn affect in any way the reading abilities of the child in later years?

In many cases mothers of normal children speak differently to their children than they do to other adults. They use a restricted vocabulary, speak in distinct clausal units, and

⁵³Remick, Maternal Speech to Children During Language Acquisition, p. 10.

in general help their child develop good comprehension of their language. Some studies have shown that the mothers do little of the above and the child develops his language without tutelage. No studies have confirmed, to this writer's knowledge, which children develop grammatically more correct language.

Language Modification and its Effect

Cazden states, "It is generally agreed that the quality of the child's language environment is the most important external factor affecting the rate of language development."⁵⁴ If this is true, then a mother's language should be a prime influence on the language development of her child. If the mother's language is a prime influence, could she improve her child's ability to communicate through such techniques as expansion, modeling, echoing, or prompting, or through a structured language program?

Cazden compared modeling to expansion in a study with twelve Negro children, twenty-eight to thirty-eight months old, attending a day care center in Boston, Massachusetts.⁵⁵ Cazden hypothesized that "children whose language is expanded or who merely hear more language will show greater language growth than do children who received neither treatment. Of

⁵⁴Courtney B. Cazden, "Environmental Assistance to the Child's Acquisition of Grammar" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1965), p. 1.

⁵⁵Ibid.

the two treatments, expanding will be more effective."⁵⁶

Four matched trios were formed on the basis of the child's chronological age, talkativeness and initial level of language development. Within the trio, they were randomly assigned to one of three groups. The expansion group met for forty minutes a day during which time everything the child said was expanded. In other words if the child said, "Pick 'mato.", the adult said, "Picking tomatoes up?" The modeling group received exposure to an equal number of well-formed sentences that were not expansions but were relevant to the child's utterances. For example, if the child said, "I got apples," the adult would say, "Do you like them?" Children in the third group, the control group, received no special treatment, but they were brought into the treatment rooms every few days so that they would remain familiar with the materials and the tutors. Tape recordings were made of each child's speech at the beginning, middle and end of the three-month period and coded according to strict rules. Several measures of language development were obtained before and after the twelve-week experimental period, because all the children, even the controls, could be expected to advance over a twelve-week period. The measures included determining Mean Length of Utterances, a copula index, verb complexity, and others.

The two major findings of the study were that, first, there was a high negative correlation between growth and

⁵⁶Ibid.

initial language level. Cazden thought possibly this was caused by "late bloomers," or a ceiling effect in the measures. Secondly, modeling, not expansion, was the more effective treatment. "This suggests that richness of verbal stimulation may be a more critical feature of the child's language environment than is the contingency of the adult's response."⁵⁷ Just filling in the child's utterances to make the nearest complete sentence, will leave less variety of vocabulary and grammatical patterns than the adult's non-expanding speech. Also, as the concentration of expansions goes up the richness of the verbal stimulation goes down. There will be no need to add vocabulary and grammatical patterns to more complete sentences.

The order of the groups were: modeling, expansion, control; the difference between the first two was larger than between the second. Dale quotes McNeill's offer of a suggestion for this result. McNeill suggests that the experimenter, like any parent, might guess wrong and provide the wrong surface structure for an expansion.⁵⁸ This would happen if the child had the future tense in mind and the parent or experimenter produced the present. Most parents would not expand all their children's sentences but in this

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Dale, Language Development Structure and Function, p. 118.

study they were expanded 100%. Another possible explanation is that having all the sentences expanded may have caused the children to be annoyed or bored.⁵⁹ Modeling would create an interesting verbal exchanged as compared to expansion.

Brown and his coworkers have discovered other kinds of verbal exchanges between parent and child. One is called prompting or constituent prompting.⁶⁰ The parent asks a question, such as "What do you want?" When the child does not answer, the parent prompts a response with "You want what?" The parent assumes that the second sentence is an easier sentence to comprehend. If a child utters a sentence that is in part unintelligible such as, "I going ow nah." The mother then imitates the child in so far as she can and replaces the unintelligible part with one of the wh-words of English, such as, "You're going where?" This is called echo or say constituent again.⁶¹

As yet it has not been demonstrated that expansions, modeling, echoing, or prompting are necessary for language learning. All that is known for sure is that some parents do these things and their children do learn.

Mann's study was made to determine whether a structured

⁵⁹Ibid. p. 119.

⁶⁰Ibid. p. 115.

⁶¹Ibid.

language program for two-year old educationally disadvantaged children and a complementary structured language program for their mothers would significantly affect the language behavior of mothers and children.⁶² Twenty-four lower socioeconomic status mothers and their two-year-old children were placed in three groups. Experimental language treatment mothers, Group one, received a combination of observation of modeled adult-child interaction, discussion, and micro-teaching based on major areas of the child's language. They received this training for one and one-half hours, twice a week for ten weeks. The mothers of the counseling and day care treatment group, Group two, met with counselors for ten weeks while their children were in the day care center. The purpose of the group counseling experience was to identify and discuss some of the concerns of low-income black mothers, to identify some alternative methods of dealing with these concerns, and to identify black positives which included such things as the black image, natural hair styles, concept of soul and what they mean to black people. The third group was the control group with no treatment. Pre- and posttests were made on Groups one and two using a syntax measure. The children were also tested on concept development. The

⁶²Marlis Mann, The Effects of a Preschool Language Program on Two-Year-Old Children and Their Mothers. Final Report (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 045 224, 1970), p. 1-67.

control group took only the posttest.

The results showed that Group one acquired the use of a more complex grammar, decreased in one-word sentences, increased in complete sentences and use of interrogatives. Other children did not undergo a change. The mothers of Group one moved from one-word and phrase responses to complete sentences when interacting with their two-year-olds. The researchers felt that the mother's change had direct effect on the children of Group one.

Conclusions of this study are:

1. A structured language training program for lower socioeconomic mothers of culturally disadvantaged two-year-old children is effective in modifying the syntax style of the mothers and the pattern of verbal interaction between mothers and the children.
2. A structured language training program for the mothers accompanied by a structured preschool program for the children is effective in changing the syntax style of the child.
3. Early intervention with a structured language development program for lower socioeconomic status mothers and children is feasible, practical, and possible. It is suggested that a longitudinal study of the population in this research be made to attempt to determine the long-range effectiveness of such a program.⁶³

There are few published experiments investigating the effects of a specific kind of experience on linguistic development. More studies like the preceding will need to be conducted to improve the preschool programs being established.

⁶³Ibid. p. 4.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the course of this paper, a review of the current research concerning the communication network between a parent and the child has been presented. Evidence shows that the child has an important need to learn how to communicate. Also, the child learns language by hearing adult speech, and both the adult and the child are affected by the speech they hear. By the time the child enters first grade, he has grown from a helpless infant to an independent person who understands close to 25,000 words. The most important overall factor of the child learning to speak is the parent since the parent, by his example, has been his first teacher. It has not been a formal education but it has been effective.

McCarthy reveals evidence for the need of a normal family environment for the baby's linguistic progress. McCarthy elaborates on babies who are brought up in a normal family group situation. These babies will vocalize more and in a more advanced manner than babies raised in an institutional environment. "The evidence shows that the lack of the individual attention and mothering that the child raised in an institutional environment experiences results in a general severe retardation in motor, language, adaptive, and social behavior and that the most serious and the most permanent

retardation occurs in the language area."¹

Cohen, special assistant to the director of the U.S. Office of Child Development, also emphasizes that the home environment is an influencing factor in language acquisition. He says that "...when a child's basic needs for affection, warmth, care, friendship, and intellectual and emotional stimulation are satisfied, the groundwork for the development of language also is being laid. The child feels that what he says and thinks is important and has meaning and merits a response."²

Suggestions for Parents
on Prereading Experiences

How Children Learn

By nature children want to learn and children follow a pattern as they are learning, although time sequences do vary. Tregaski and his associates write:

The child learns about his own world, first, from his own exploring and second, from his parents. The parents tell him what to call things; show him acceptable behavior, how to keep from being hurt, and how to organize the many things he sees, hears, touches, tastes, and smells. The parents do this by their actions, by listening and more importantly, by talking to and with the child."³

¹Dorothea McCarthy, Ed. Factors that Influence Language Growth (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 089 359, 1953), p. 9.

²"Ways to Help Children Develop Good Language Skills," Good Housekeeping 174 (February 1972): 182.

³George K. Tregaski, and Others. Language Experiences for Your Preschooler. Part 2: Activities in the Neighborhood (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 099 135, 1974), p. 8.

Larrick feels the young child is curious and is eager to explore and to know about his world. If he is left to his own devices, a child learns a great deal by himself, but few adults have confidence in this approach to learning. Therefore, most children are told what is to be learned and when to learn it. Larrick points out that a child learns best, those things that are most interesting to him.⁴

The authors of a pamphlet for parents on developing language experiences for preschoolers write:

In order to grow as a learner, the young child needs to be actively involved with his surroundings. He must be allowed to explore, to handle things, to do things, and to practice new learnings. The parent can help the child by making the surroundings safe enough for him to explore, by allowing the child to do as many things for himself as he can, by acting as a model, and by giving the child feedback about how well he is doing.⁵

A child's home is the kind of setting educators recommend for learning. There is space for each child, and reading can be done in an easy chair. Projects done by the child do not need to be disturbed and instructional materials are

⁴Nancy Larrick, A Parent's Guide to Children's Education (United States: Trident Press, 1963), p. 17-18.

⁵Tregaski, Language Experiences for Your Preschooler. Part 2, p. 12.

in abundance. Books, magazines, newspapers, television, radio, thermometers, measuring cups, clocks, labels on cereals and soaps, and similiar objects, bring education through first-hand experiences. Homes have to be an ideal setting for learning since schools are always trying to duplicate home experiences. "Home life is packed with these experiences. They are most valuable in a warm atmosphere of love, where the child feels free to ask questions and try new things. This is the perfect climate for growing."⁶

Larrick offers parents and teachers suggestions as to how to help their children to learn.

1. Start with the child and build activities fitted to his interests.
2. Approval builds confidence in children. Adults often forget how long it takes to master even simple skills.
3. Rewards are more effective than punishments. (One research study showed that praise is three or four times more effective than repeated scolding.)
4. A child learns what he does. Information cannot be poured into a child's head. Learning is most vivid when the child is actively involved.
5. Adults create anxiety and failure in an effort to get the child to learn. Threatening may pull the child back from learning for fear of a disaster.
6. Assigning no tasks for fear of creating anxiety in the child may deaden curiosity.

⁶Larrick, A Parent's Guide to Children's Education, p. 3.

7. Pushing can be dangerous resulting in feelings of insecurity and rejection, but the youngster who is overprotected and overindulged suffers too.⁷

Larrick concludes her suggestions for parents on how to help children learn with this statement.

Somewhere in between there is a middle course, wherein a child's self-confidence is constantly strengthened by the unconcealed love of his parents while his talents are being forged on challenging experiences. This isn't pushing, and it isn't pampering. It is reaffirming the child's faith in himself while encouraging him to reach out on his own.⁸

Strang says, "Preschool experiences pave the way for successful reading in school."⁹ The primary purpose of this paper has been to investigate current literature which discusses the oral language development of the infant and preschool child as setting the foundation for the next step of learning to read. Suggestions for parents on developing oral language and other prereading objectives have been given by many authorities in the field of reading. Oral language development is involved in every preschool experience.

Oral language and Reading

Learning to look, seeing objects that take on meaning, is a prerequisite to later perception of printed words. Parents can help children observe, find out and evaluate

⁷Ibid. p. 19-33.

⁸Ibid. p. 38.

⁹Ruth Strang, Helping Your Child Improve His Reading (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1962), p. 96.

what they see. Larrick's suggestions to parents are:

1. Parents should take time to note interesting things, to point out identifying details and to raise questions about what they see. The children will naturally do the same.
2. After reading a story to a child, parents should take time to talk about the pictures mentioning details to add meaning.
3. Seeing new things by pointing out distinguishing features is an important part of every person's education.
4. Accurate reporting will come easily after careful observations are made.
5. Parents should consult experts when in doubt about particular information rather than just skipping it.¹⁰

Learning to listen and learning to imitate sounds is also essential to beginning reading and oral language development. Listening to new things, hearing clear and precise speech, hearing questions, and having opportunities to talk add meaning to the child's background of experiences. Talking is important. Once a child learns the language it is easy to forget that he needs practice with oral language. "The child who talks easily about many things is better prepared for reading than one who has been seen but not heard."¹¹ Parents can do much for oral language development since the family group is small and family life provides opportunities for free, warm conversations on a variety of topics.

¹⁰Larrick, A Parent's Guide to Children's Education, p. 39-42.

¹¹Ibid. p. 150.

Television steals conversation time. While watching television a child looks and listens but the opportunity to talk is denied. Parents can give their child opportunities for oral language development by:

1. Taking time to talk with the child.
2. Taking time to listen to the child.
3. Provide for plenty of group talking in the family.
4. Encourage a child's natural flair for freshness and beauty of language. (Enter into his play with words, raise questions about the things he sees, hears, feels, smells, and touches, etc.)¹²

A child's thinking and talking ability accounts in part for his reading ability. By talking and reading to children a life long interest in books and reading is being established. Surrounding the child with books, visiting the library, and being a reading model are ways adults influence a child to read. McCarthy says that children unconsciously absorb the attitudes of adults toward books.¹³

Strang summarizes in this way, "During the preschool period it is more important to establish pleasant associations with reading, to foster "insatiable curiosities," as Pipling's elephant's child expressed it, and to stimulate a desire to learn to read, than to strive for any specific accomplishments."¹⁴

¹²Ibid. p. 153-154.

¹³McCarthy, Factors that Influence Language Growth, p. 12.

¹⁴Strang, Helping Your Child Improve His Reading, p. 109.

She summarizes the prereading achievements and how they are acquired in this way:

Desire to read	{ Seeing others enjoy reading. Being read to. Handling and looking at books.
Varied experiences that give meaning to words	{ New things to see, hear, and handle. Trips to farm, seashore, etc. Play activities alone or with friends or pets.
A good speaking vocabulary and ability to speak in simple sentences	{ Being listened to. Opportunities to talk with family and others. Having questions answered. Hearing clear, simple, precise speech.
Ability to identify similarities and differences of sounds in words	{ Listening to carefully pronounced words, and repeating them. Games to identify words that begin alike and that rhyme.
Knowledge of the names of the letters	{ A B C blocks and books. Games to recognize letters when they are named. 15

Parents of preschool children can stimulate their child toward normal speech and language development and therein lay a foundation for reading. They can best accomplish this in a home environment of affection, warmth, care, and friendship. Their child will have opportunities to practice oral language if parents take time to talk to their child, listen to what their child has to say, and read to their child often while talking about the details that he sees, hears, and feels. Parents need to keep in mind that

¹⁵Ibid. p. 109-110.

approval builds confidence in their child, rewards are more effective than punishment and their child is stimulated when he is an active participant in an experience he is interested in.

From the birth cry to connected, intelligent speech and reading is a long step. Learning to speak is an important step to learning to read. Children who cannot speak their language will have problems learning to write and read their language. The preceding suggestions for parents are the beginning. There are many books, pamphlets, and articles available for parents to help them set a solid base of oral language and reading development. Following is an annotated bibliography of books, pamphlets, and articles the writer recommends for further reading.

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR PARENTS

Development of language

Freud, Esti D.; and Weiser, Morton. "How Well Does Your Preschooler Speak?" Parents' Magazine 46 (January 1971): 40-41+.

Gives normal pattern of speech development in toddlers and preschoolers and the signs of potential problems.

"How Babies Learn to Talk." Good Housekeeping 169 (November 1969): 200.

One page short summary on development of language in infants, the speed with which a child develops this ability, and the problem of late starters of language.

Lang, Cynthia. "Baby Learns to Talk." Parents' Magazine 47 (October 1972): 45+.

This article, written by a parent for parents, answers the question, "How does language begin?"

Omar, Margaret F. "That Magic Moment When Baby Starts to Talk." Parents' Magazine 46 (September 1971): 54+.

This article gives the developmental stages of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and sentence length. Parental help for the child to express himself more fully and confidently at each natural stage of development is stressed.

Weinstein, Grace W. "Baby Learns to Talk." Parents' Magazine 44 (September 1969): 126+.

A look at normal development from infancy to six years old. Suggests ways for parents to develop a child's awareness of the world, and specifically, training in his powers of speech.

Whipple, Dr. Dorothy V. "How Babies Learn to Talk." Parents' Magazine 44 (February 1969): 48+.

Explains Language Development.

Language Problems in the Preschool Child

Lang, Charles I. Will Your Child Learn to Talk Correctly?
Danvill, Illinois: Interstate Printers and Publishers,
Inc., 1957.

A manual for correct articulation in human speech with guidance for speech development. The book is in two parts: "It Should Happen this Way," and "It Could Happen this Way."

Learning to Talk: Speech Hearing and Language Problems in the Pre-school Child. Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 038 813, 1969.

Addressed to parents, the guide considers children with communication disorders. Information provided covers the nature of such disorders, the function of sound in talking, and the development of speech through the first seven years of childhood. Factors that may be involved if the child has trouble learning to speak are explained, including hearing, speech and language handicaps. The parent's role is defined, and books and services are reviewed. This pamphlet is available through:

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402 (\$0.45)

Speech, Language and Hearing Program: A Guide for Head Start Personnel. Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 077 584, 1973.

This guide is designed to assist Head Start personnel in effectively approaching communication problems of children. Sections of particular interest to parents are: "Factors Influencing Speech and Language Development," "How Adults Can Stimulate Normal Speech and Language Development," and "How Adults Can Help Children with Speech, Language and Hearing Handicaps." Available through:

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

(Stock No. 1792-00010 \$0.70)

Language Activities for Preschoolers

American Speech and Hearing Association. Partners in Language: A Guide for Parents. Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 089 857, 1973.

Easy to read pamphlet on basic communication needs of a child and how they should be met. Available from:

American Speech and Hearing Association
9030 Georgetown Rd.
Washington, D.C. 20014 (No price quoted)

Cole, William, "Tots in the Tower of Bable." Today's Health 48 (December 1970): 54-55+.

An article on the basic communication needs of a child and how they should be met by parents.

New York State Education Department. Language Activities for Your Preschooler. Part I: Activities at Home. Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 095 087, 1974.

This manuscript introduces parents to a number of learning activities suitable for implementation in the home. The activities are uncomplicated and reasonable in cost and time. Available through:

The State Education Department Bureau of
Continuing Education Curriculum Development
The University of the State of New York
Albany, New York 12224 (No price quoted)

Tregaski, George K., and Others. Language Experiences for Your Preschooler. Part II: Activities in the Neighborhood. Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 099 135, 1974.

This publication introduces parents to a number of learning activities which might evolve from excursions in their neighborhoods and communities. In each section, background information about the topic is provided, a directed activity is explained, and activities to be done at home are suggested as follow-up.

"Ways to Help Children Develop Good Language Skills." Good Housekeeping 174 (February 1972): 182-183.

Short article emphasizing the child's need to communicate. The article contains guidelines for speech development and activities that parents can employ to encourage and expand language development.

Education and Reading.

Doman, Glenn. How to Teach Your Baby to Read: The Gentle Revolution. New York: Random House, 1964.

This book shows that tiny children want to, can, are, and should learn to read. It also discusses the controversies of early reading and presents in detail how to go about teaching reading to a young child.

Dreiman, David B. How to Get Better Schools. New York: Harper and Pro., 1956.

This book deals with the work of the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools. It is designed to help any parent take the proper steps in improving their school's reading program.

Duker, Sam; Nally, Thomas. The Truth About Your Child's Reading. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1956.

This book provides the answers to most parent's questions about reading instruction. It includes discussions on defining reading and its stages of growth, comparison of reading programs, and what parents can do for a reading program. Checklists are provided for parents for evaluating a classroom reading program and evaluating reading progress of their child. There is a bibliography of books and films of interest.

Larrick, Nancy. A Parent's Guide to Children's Education. United States: Trident Press, 1963.

A book for parents of preschool and elementary children designed to help parents help their child with education in the classroom and at home. Dr. Larrick talks of the parent as the first and an important teacher. Further reading for parents is suggested.

Newman, Harold. Your Child's Reading and What You Can Do About It. New York: MSS Information Corporation, 1973.

Strang, Ruth. Helping Your Child Improve His Reading. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1962.

Strang shows parents how they can supplement the school's reading program at home. Of special interest to parents of preschoolers is a chapter "Preschool Prelude to Success in Reading." The book also includes question and answer sections at the end of each chapter, specific suggestions for parents to use to help children, and a bibliography of children's books and books for parents.

Books Available Through
International Reading Association

- 114-6 Parents and Reading edited by Carl B. Smith. (\$3.50)
- 304-1 Sources of Good Books for Poor Readers compiled by George D. Spache. (\$0.75)
- 307-6 Sources of Good Books and Magazines for Children compiled by Winifred C. Ladley. (\$0.75)
- 870-1 What is Reading Readiness? by Norma Rogers.
- 871 How Can I Get My Teenager to Read? by Rosemary Winebrenner.
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- 876 How Can I Help My Child Get Ready to Read? by Norma Rogers.
- 877 Why Read Aloud to Children? by Julie M. T. Chan.

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Publications of the
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Child Development in the Home. DHEW Publication No. (OHD) 74-42

This booklet describes guidelines to help parents develop happy, self-confident and self-disciplined children.

Fun in the Making. DHEW Publication No. (OCD) 73-31

Offers some ideas for making children's toys and games.

Your Child From 1 to 6. DHEW Publication No. (OHD) 74-26

Describes the growth of children from 1 to 6 years of age. Emphasizes the child's emotional needs and his relationship to other members of the family.

Your Child From 1 to 3. DHEW Publication No. (OCD) 73-56

This short pamphlet covers the most important points parents need to consider as their child leaves babyhood and enters childhood.

Your Child From 3 to 4. DHEW Publication No. (OCD) 73-57

This pamphlet covers many important points parents need to consider for their child in his preschool years.

No. 1. The Ways Children Learn. DHEW Publication No. (OHD) 75-1026.

Describes the ways in which a child is already equipped to learn, how he learns and what he needs to know. This is one part of the Caring for Children Series.

No. 7. The Individual Child. DHEW Publication No. (OHD) 75-1032.

Describes the uniqueness of each child making clear that every child is different in appearance, temperament, abilities and attitudes. Another part of the Caring for Children Series.

No. 10. Language is for Communication. DHEW Publication No. (OHD) 75-1035.

Brings out the importance of a good knowledge of language which opens the door to communication, thus helping the child to grow socially and to increase his friendships.

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