Early Word Acquisition

1. Onset of Words
2. Lexical Aspects (i.e. word meaning)
3. Overextensions

1. Onset of First Words

What is a Word?

- Comprehension
- Production with Any Meaning
- Production with Adult Meaning
- Phonologically Correct

Smith (1926)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0;8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0;10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:9</td>
<td>118</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Benedict (1979)

- 8 Children
- Longitudinal Study (Six Months)
- Comprehension (C) and Production (P)
- Rate and Gap between C & P

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0;10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0;11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Rate of C twice as fast as P for first 50 words
- Up to 100 words understood before first words
- BUT: rate and gap are independent,
- e.g. David 1;3 C = 80, P = 40
      Elizabeth 1;2 C = 150; P = 0
2. Lexical Meaning

1. Nominals
Specific: individuals
General: all members of a category
Problem: how to distinguish the two
e.g. ‘daddy’ (all men)
‘doggie’ (family dog)

2. Action Words
General Actions: ‘down’, ‘go’ ‘eat’
Locatives: ‘in’ ‘on’ ‘table’
Social-Action Games, ‘peekaboo’

3. Personal-social
Affective states and relations
Assertions: ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘want’

4. Modifiers
Properties & qualities of things or events
Attributes, ‘big’
States, ‘allgone’, ‘hot’
Locatives, ‘there’
Possessives, ‘mine’

Two Kinds of Children
Expressive: Higher use of social-personal words
Referential: Dominance of general nominals

Percentages of Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Referential</th>
<th>Expressive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific Nom.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Nom.</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal-social</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifiers</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise
Answer the following questions:
1. Which group uses the most Specific Nominals? Actions? Modifiers?
2. Do expressive children use more Personal-Social words than General Nominals?

Summary:
Expressive Children use all categories more often than referential children except for General Nominals

Why are children referential or expressive?
• Environmental
• Individual Preferences
• Continuum

How are categories acquired in Comprehension (C) vs. Production (P)?

Conclusion
Action words are most frequent in C
General Nominals are most frequent in P

Qualification:
Our conclusion did not consider longitudinal change

New Conclusion:
There is a continuum from early Action words to greater use of General Nominals

Summary
• Words first appear in comprehension & then in production
• Rate and gap are independent
• Categories of meaning: nominals, action, personal-social, modifiers
• Referential vs. Expressive