

Child Language Acquisition and Growth

BARBARA C. LUST

Cornell University



Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> xv
<i>List of tables</i>	xvi
<i>Preface</i>	xvii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xviii
1 The Growth of language	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 A logical-developmental perspective	1
1.3 Current research questions	3
1.4 Language acquisition, linguistic theory and cognitive science	3
1.4.1 Competing models	4
1.4.2 Cognitive Science and language development	4
1.5 The structure of this book	5
1.6 Toward a more comprehensive theory of language acquisition	6
1.7 Supplementary readings	7
2 What is acquired?	9
2.1 What is language?	9
2.1.1 Attempting to define language	9
2.1.2 Language and thought	11
2.1.3 Language and communication	11
2.2 The discovery of the place of human language: in the mind	12
2.2.1 A cognitive system: grammar	13
2.2.2 A formal distinction: I-Language versus E-Language	13
2.3 The computational system	14
2.3.1 From the finite to the infinite	14
2.3.2 A digital system	14
2.3.3 A combinatorial system	15
2.3.4 The power of sequencing	15
2.3.5 The recursive property	16
2.3.6 Constituent structure	17
2.3.7 Hierarchical structure: the “secret skeleton”	18
2.3.8 Discovery of syntax: special features of the system	18
2.3.9 Knowing the impossible	20
2.3.10 Finding the meaning	21
2.3.11 Closing in on the mystery: the hidden computational system	22
2.3.12 Summarizing the basic properties of the hidden system	22

2.4	Designing the architecture of the Language Faculty	23
2.4.1	The basic design	23
2.4.2	The interfaces	23
2.4.3	Levels of representation	24
2.4.4	Relation of child language acquisition to linguistic theory	25
2.4.5	Does the Language Faculty develop?	26
2.5	Conclusions	26
2.6	Supplementary readings	27
3	What is the problem of language acquisition?	28
3.1	Getting started	28
3.1.1	What evidence do children need?	28
3.2	The nature of the evidence: searching the speech stream for the units	33
3.2.1	The physical evidence	33
3.2.2	The linguistic evidence	36
3.3	How could the problem be solved?	40
3.3.1	Prosodic bootstrapping	41
3.3.2	Phonological bootstrapping	42
3.3.3	Semantic bootstrapping	42
3.4	Conclusions	47
3.5	Supplementary readings	48
4	How we can construct a theory of language acquisition	49
4.1	Theoretical approaches to the study of language acquisition	49
4.1.1	Classical approaches to epistemology	49
4.1.2	The challenge of language acquisition to classical empiricist approaches	49
4.2	Current approaches to the study of language acquisition	52
4.2.1	A rationalist approach	52
4.2.2	Challenges to the UG paradigm	58
4.2.3	Empiricist approaches to the study of language acquisition	63
4.2.4	Empirical rationalists and rational empiricists	69
4.2.5	Resolving epistemological tensions	69
4.3	Toward a comprehensive and realistic theory of language acquisition	70
4.3.1	Predictions of a rationalist paradigm	70
4.3.2	Predictions of an empiricist paradigm	71
4.4	Conclusions	71
4.5	Supplementary readings	72
5	Brain and language development	73
5.1	Introduction	73
5.2	The human brain	74
5.2.1	Cerebral cortex	75
5.2.2	Brain development	76

5.3	Cerebral dominance	76
5.3.1	Handedness	78
5.3.2	Sign language	78
5.3.3	Development	79
5.4	Dissociation: localization within the left hemisphere	84
5.4.1	Language pathologies	85
5.4.2	Classic aphasias	86
5.4.3	Refining dissociations	86
5.4.4	Modeling the brain's organization	87
5.4.5	Individual variance	89
5.5	Brain imaging in language development	90
5.6	Language development and dissociations	90
5.6.1	Developmental disorders	90
5.6.2	SLI (Specific Language Impairment)	91
5.6.3	Special cases	92
5.7	Plasticity	92
5.8	Critical Period	93
5.8.1	Genie	94
5.8.2	Second language acquisition	96
5.9	Creating a theory	97
5.9.1	Where is the Language Faculty?	97
5.9.2	Is there a language gene?	97
5.10	Conclusions	98
5.11	Supplementary readings	100
6	The nature of nurture	101
6.1	Is experience necessary?	101
6.1.1	The "royal" experiments	101
6.1.2	Lack of overt practice	101
6.1.3	Oral babbling in deaf children	102
6.1.4	Language acquisition without a language model	102
6.1.5	Language acquisition without communication	104
6.1.6	Language acquisition without direct perceptual input	105
6.1.7	The inscrutability of rate of language acquisition	105
6.1.8	Summary	106
6.2	When does linguistic experience begin?	106
6.2.1	Before birth?	106
6.2.2	Summary	109
6.3	What is the nature of the input?	109
6.3.1	Baby Talk Register (BTR)	110
6.3.2	How does experience work?	112
6.3.3	What is the nature of experience?	118
6.4	Conclusions	121
6.5	Supplementary readings	122

7	How can we tell what children know? Methods for the study of language acquisition	123
7.1	Introduction	123
7.1.1	Knowing vs. doing	123
7.2	Typology of methods	129
7.2.1	Grammaticality judgments	129
7.2.2	Assessing language production	132
7.2.3	Assessing comprehension	135
7.2.4	Summary	136
7.3	Methods before the first words	136
7.3.1	High Amplitude Sucking (HAS)	136
7.3.2	Head turn techniques	137
7.4	Comparing methods	138
7.4.1	Naturalistic vs. experimental	138
7.4.2	Comprehension vs. production	139
7.5	Conclusions	140
7.6	Supplementary readings	141
8	The acquisition of phonology	143
8.1	Introduction	143
8.1.1	What must children acquire?	143
8.1.2	What are the challenges?	145
8.1.3	Leading questions	146
8.2	How do children meet the challenge? Laying the foundations: the first twelve months	148
8.2.1	Development of speech perception	148
8.2.2	Development of speech production	152
8.2.3	Linking perception and production	155
8.3	First words and beyond	155
8.3.1	Early phonological deformations	155
8.3.2	Is acquisition of phonology pre-ordained?	159
8.3.3	“Mushy Mouth–Mushy Ear” Hypothesis	162
8.3.4	Grammatical mapping: continuity of the Language Faculty	164
8.3.5	Suprasegmental dimensions	172
8.3.6	Summary	175
8.4	Conclusions	175
8.4.1	Toward an explanation	177
8.4.2	Linguistic theories	178
8.4.3	Open questions	179
8.5	Supplementary readings	180
9	The acquisition of syntax	182
9.1	Introduction	182
9.1.1	What must children acquire?	182
9.1.2	What are the challenges?	187
9.1.3	Leading questions	187
9.2	How do children meet the challenge? Laying the foundations: the first twelve months	187

9.2.1	Perception	188
9.2.2	Production	194
9.2.3	Perception and production	194
9.3	First words and beyond	194
9.3.1	The development of production	194
9.3.2	Principles and parameters	208
9.3.3	Operations	212
9.3.4	Computation: anaphora	213
9.3.5	Summary	216
9.4	Conclusions	217
9.4.1	Toward an explanation	217
9.4.2	Open questions	218
9.5	Supplementary readings	218
10	The acquisition of semantics	219
10.1	Introduction	219
10.1.1	What must children acquire?	219
10.1.2	What are the challenges?	222
10.1.3	Leading questions	223
10.1.4	Language and thought	223
10.1.5	Relating language and cognition	225
10.2	How do children meet the challenge? Laying the foundations: the first twelve months	227
10.2.1	Perception	227
10.2.2	Production	228
10.2.3	Perception and production	229
10.2.4	Summary	229
10.3	First words and beyond	229
10.3.1	Creativity	229
10.3.2	Semantic displacement	230
10.3.3	Fast mapping	230
10.3.4	Overextensions	231
10.3.5	Categorical throughout	232
10.3.6	Theories of the acquisition of word meaning	233
10.3.7	Higher order semantics	238
10.3.8	Summary	239
10.4	Conclusions	239
10.4.1	Toward an explanation	240
10.4.2	Open questions	240
10.5	Supplementary readings	241
11	On the nature of language growth	242
11.1	Formal analyses from the start: "Frogs all the way down" (Levy 1983b)	242
11.1.1	Grammatical categories	242
11.1.2	Grammatical case	245
11.1.3	Grammatical gender	250
11.1.4	Classifiers	251
11.1.5	Summary	253

11.2	Mechanisms of growth	253
11.2.1	Do the mechanisms of language acquisition change?	253
11.2.2	Eliminating false hypotheses	254
11.2.3	Summary	258
11.3	Syntactic bootstrapping	258
11.4	Conclusions	262
11.5	Supplementary readings	262
12	Conclusions: toward an integrated theory of language acquisition	263
12.1	Introduction	263
12.2	Conclusions	263
12.3	Toward a theory of language acquisition	264
12.3.1	Linguistic bootstrapping	264
12.3.2	Strong continuity of the Language Faculty	265
12.3.3	Reviewing Universal Grammar	265
12.3.4	The growth of language	266
12.4	The open questions	266
12.4.1	The mystery remains	266
12.4.2	A suggested framework	267
12.5	Toward the future	267
12.5.1	Cross-linguistic data	267
12.5.2	Pragmatics	268
12.5.3	Multilingualism	269
12.5.4	Brain imaging	269
	Appendices	270
	1 Developmental milestones in motor and language development (adapted from Lenneberg 1967)	270
	2a Developmental milestones in infant speech perception	272
	2b Examples of sound distinctions perceived by infants	274
	3 Developmental milestones in infant speech production	276
	4 Developmental milestones in infant syntax: perception	278
	5 Developmental milestones in infant syntax: production	280
	6 Developmental milestones in infant semantics	281
	7 Abbreviations and notations	283
	<i>Glossary</i>	285
	<i>References</i>	293
	<i>Author index</i>	373
	<i>Subject index</i>	383