Chapter 9

1. *Baby talk*. Individual answers will vary. The following are some suggestions for English.

a. Semantic categories:

Animals: horsey, kitty, piggy, bunny, doggie

Events: bye-bye, night-night, boo-boo, ow-ow

People: mama, dada, nana

Objects: choo-choo, jammies, tummy, potty

b. Rules:

i. A consonant cluster may be reduced: for example, *stomach* [stʌmək] becomes *tummy* [tʌmi]; final consonants may be dropped.

ii. Unstressed syllables may be dropped: for example [pədʒǽməz] becomes [dʒǽmiz].

iii. The diminutive -i (spelled *y* or *ie*) may be suffixed to a word, ­sometimes replacing existing syllables.

iv. Reduplicated syllables may also replace existing syllables, as in *bye-bye* for *good-bye*.

2. Question formation. In this stage, the child appears to be able to correctly form questions from positive statements, evidenced by Can I go? Why do you have one tooth? and so on. However, the child is not forming negative questions correctly. Instead of inverting the subject and the negative auxiliary, the child is inserting a positive auxiliary to the left of the subject, while leaving the negative auxiliary in place. For example, from the statement I can’t go, the question should be formed by inverting the subject and the negative auxiliary: Can’t I go? But the child simply inserts the positive auxiliary can, coming up with Can I can’t go? The utterance Why you don’t have a tongue? is a little different because no positive auxiliary has been inserted. Rather, the negative auxiliary has been left in place instead of being inverted.

3. A child’s grammar. Answers will vary according to the child, the language, the age, and the circumstances.

4. “Two-word stage” grammar.

• \*a celery: celery is a noncount noun. You cannot say \*one celery, \*five celeries in English. One would have to say one stalk or a bunch of ­celery or five stalks. The determiner a can only be followed by single, countable nouns.

• \*a Becky: Names, especially names of people, do not usually occur with determiners. However, note that this phrase is well-formed in certain contexts. For example: My name is Becky, and I live next door to a Becky (someone whose name is also Becky).

• \*a hands: the article a must be followed by a singular noun.

• \*more nut: more must be followed by a mass noun (coffee) or a plural noun (nuts).

• \*two tinker-toy: numerals greater than one must be followed by a plural (and countable) noun.

• \*that Adam: names don’t usually occur with determiners, but the phrase may be well-formed in certain contexts: e.g., That Adam is a charming boy.

5. Holophrastic stage phonology.

a. (Data given in phonetic transcription)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| (1) dõnt | dot | the final cluster [nt] reduced to single [t]; vowel not nasalized |
| (2) skɪp | kʰɪp | initial cluster [sk] reduced to single consonant; [k] aspirated |
| (3) ʃu | su | a palatal fricative is replaced by an alveolar fricative |
| (4) ðæt | dæt | an interdental fricative is replaced by an alveolar stop |
| (5) pʰle | pʰe | the initial cluster [phl] is replaced by a single ­aspirated stop |
| (6) θʌm̃p | dʌp | an initial voiceless interdental fricative is replaced by a voiced alveolar stop; the final [mp] cluster is replaced by the single [p]; the vowel is not nasalized |
| (7) bæθ | bæt | a final interdental fricative is replaced by a ­voiceless alveolar stop |
| (8) ʧap | tʰap | a palatal affricate is replaced by an alveolar stop; [t] is aspirated |
| (9) kɪɾi | kɪdi | flap replaced by alveolar stop |
| (10) laɪt | waɪt | lateral liquid replaced by (labio)velar glide |
| (11) dali | dawi | lateral liquid replaced by (labio)velar glide |
| (12) gro | go | initial cluster [gr] reduced to single consonant |

b. General rules for children’s pronunciation. Sample answer:

• In consonant clusters consisting of a stop and a fricative, liquid, or nasal, delete the fricative, liquid, or nasal.

• Replace interdental fricatives with alveolar stops. Voicing seems to be determined by the following rule: the stop is voiced word-initially and voiceless word-finally.

• Replace palatals with alveolars.

• Replace the lateral liquid with the (labio)velar glide.

• Replace the flap with the voiced alveolar stop.

6. Acquisition of deixis. As discussed in Chapter 4, these words are deictic words. Their meaning is dependent on the context of the utterance in which they occur (i.e., when and where the conversation takes place, the location of the speaker and the hearer, etc.). Children may have difficulty acquiring deictic expressions because their interpretation requires contextual information and their meaning changes depending on the circumstances of the utterance.

7. Overgeneralization.

a. children—childs

b. went—goed

c. better—gooder

d. best—goodest

e. brought—bringed

f. sang—singed

g. geese—gooses

h. worst—baddest

i. knives—knifes

j. worse—badder

8. Child phonology.

a. Child 1 deletes final voiced stops (exemplified by bib, slide, and dog), but retains final voiceless stops (soap, feet, sock). The voiced fricative [z] is devoiced to [s] in this child’s pronunciations of cheese and shoes. Also, the voiceless fricative [ʃ] is replaced with the affricate [ʧ] in dish.

Child 2 appears to devoice all final consonants. An exception is bead, where the final [d] is deleted instead of being devoiced; the vowel is lengthened. Also, the final palatal fricative of fish has its place of articu­lation changed to alveolar.

For both children, the classes of sounds that undergo the rules (voiced stops for child 1, all stops for child 2) constitute natural classes.

b. Child 1 has one minimal pair: [daɪ] “slide” and [da] “dog,” which show that /aɪ/ and /a/ contrast in his grammar. Child 2 has one minimal set containing three words: [gis] “geese,” [tis] “cheese,” and [bis] “bees” showing that /g/, /t/, and /b/ are all distinct phonemes in the child’s grammar.

9. Wug tests. Answers will vary but should be along the lines of the following:

The child’s knowledge of the comparative -er could be tested by showing her a picture of a boy with spotted skin. The researcher would say “Look at this boy. His skin is really wug.” Then the child could be shown another boy with even spottier skin. The researcher would say “Look at this boy. Look at his skin! His skin is even . . .” If the right intonation was used, the child would hopefully finish the sentence with wugger.

The superlative -est could be tested by showing a third boy with even more spotty skin and saying “Look at this boy. Look at his skin! His skin is the . . .” Again, intonation would be crucial in encouraging the child to complete the sentence with the superlative.

The present progressive could be tested by showing the child a doll and saying “Look at this doll! I’m going to make her blick!” The researcher would then make the doll perform some novel action such as spinning on one leg. The researcher would then ask the child, “What’s she doing now?” The child would hopefully respond, “She’s blicking.”

The agentive could be tested with the same doll and action. The researcher could say, “This doll really likes to blick. She does it all the time. She’s a really good . . .” With the right intonation, the child should finish the sentence with *blicker*.

10. Overgeneralized argument structures.

a. In each of these five examples, the child has created a novel causative verb. In the first three examples, verbs that are intransitive in the sense intended have been used as if they were transitive, and in the last two examples, the causative verbs have been derived from adjectives. Although there are many similar causative alternations in English, creating causative verbs out of intransitive verbs and adjectives is not a fully productive process. It is possible that the children’s grammar differs from the adult grammar in that they have not learned to restrict this rule.

b. Similar but well-formed examples in adult English include:

I broke the glass. (cf. The glass broke.)

The baby toppled the tower of blocks. (cf. The tower of blocks toppled.)

I cleaned the table. (cf. The table is clean.)

11. Egyptian and Iraqi Arabic.

a. Egyptian Arabic speakers insert a high front vowel [i]. It is inserted between two consonants that start a syllable (i.e., comprise the onset of the syllable).

b. Iraqi Arabic speakers insert the same vowel [i] under the same circumstances; however, they insert the [i] before the two consonants rather than between them. This in effect creates an extra syllable consisting of the [i] and the first of the two consonants, which is more in keeping with the syllable structures of Iraqi Arabic.

c. The third form provides the clue. In both the A and B forms of Arabic, the final syllable begins with the consonant cluster [tl] prior to [i] insertion. In Egyptian Arabic this would be broken up by inserting an [i] between the [t] and the [l], whereas in Iraqi Arabic, the [i] would be inserted before the [tl]. From this it can be deduced that A is Iraqi Arabic and B is Egyptian Arabic.

12. Language development. Telegraphic stage. We can see this by the fact that (i) these are multiword utterances that are (ii) inconsistent in their use of function words, which is the hallmark characteristic of this stage of development.

13. MLU.

a. Answers may vary here, but consistency is important. Hyphens have been inserted in the sentences below to make clear which morphemes are being counted in this sample answer. Morpheme count:

a. Mikey not see him. [4]

b. Where ball go? [3]

c. Look Mommy, doggie. [3]

d. Big doggie. [2]

e. He no bite ya. [4]

f. He eat-s mud. [4]

g. Kitty hid-ing. [3]

h. Grampie wear glasses. [3]

i. He funny. [2]

j. He love-s hamburger-s. [5]

k. Daddy ride bike. [3]

l. That-’s mines. [3]

m. That my toy. [3]

n. Him sleep-ing. [3]

o. Want more milk. [3]

p. Read moon book. [3]

q. Me want that. [3]

r. Teddy up. [2]

s. Daddy ’puter. [2]

t. ’Puter broke. [2]

u. Cookie-s and milk!!! [4]

v. Me Superman. [2]

w. Mommy-’s angry. [3]

x. Allgone kitty. [2]

y. Here my bat-ball. [4]

b. MLU in morphemes is the total number of morphemes (75) divided by the number of utterances (25) = 3. MLU in words is 66 divided by 25 = 2.64.

Challenge question*.* Allgone is probably not analyzed as two morphemes (or words), but is a fixed expression, so one morpheme.   
Batball probably means ‘baseball’ (ball that you hit with a bat). Since it is a novel word, Sam has put together two words/morphemes creatively. It must be two morphemes.   
Glasses is likely one morpheme because it is not semantically plural.

Cookies is semantically plural, so it is likely two morphemes.

14. *Challenge exercise:* Telegraphic stage. Answers will vary. Hypothesis 1 is that children drop subjects because they have limited processing resources, for example, limited memory capacity. Another possibility (Hypothesis 2) is that children drop subjects for grammatical reasons; that is, they “assume” that English is a language like Italian that allows subjects to be dropped; they have “misset” the UG parameter that identified English as a language that requires subjects to be overtly expressed and Italian as one that does not (see Chapter 4).

A possible objection to Hypothesis 1 is that children drop subjects but not objects. Why would subjects be favored if this were just the effect of an overload in processing? A possible objection to Hypothesis 2 is that if the child “missets” her parameter to a null subject setting, how does she ever learn the correct setting for English? What information in the input would tell her that the subject is always required in English? She will hear colloquial expressions such as “wanna leave?,” which might be misleading. Also, there is a logical problem: just because all (or most) of the sentences she hears have overt subjects, she cannot conclude from this that the next sentence might have a dropped subject. For this, she would need “negative evidence”; that is, explicit information that it is not grammatical to drop subjects in English except in very restricted cases such as “wanna leave.” Parents do not often provide children with explicit information about the rules of the language.

Another possible explanation (Hypothesis 3) might be that children drop subjects for pragmatic reasons, when the identity of the subject is contextually salient, e.g., the subject is the child himself, the speaker. A possible objection to Hypothesis 3 is that the identity of the subject is not always predictable from context; that is, the subject is not always the child himself, as can be seen in the examples. Also, it is hard to define what is contextually salient to the child.

15. Overextensions.

a. shape: all items in column B are round.

b. shape and function: all items in column B are round and edible.

c. characteristic activity: all items in column B fly.

d. appearance: all items in column B are furry, four-legged animals.

e. appearance and size: all items in column B are vehicles larger than a car.

f. gender: all items in column B are either men or associated with men.

g. shape: all items in column B are shaped like a moon at some point in its phase: either a full moon (like the chrome dial of the dishwasher), a half-moon (like the lemon slice), a crescent moon (half a Cheerio), or a sliver of a moon (the hangnail).

16. *Sentence types.*

a. coordinations: (1) No, ’cause there’s a monster and the monster can [s]care you. [2;7—earliest]; (2) I bumped into people I went past and I bumped into those things.

b. embedded clauses: (1) I thought it was a carrot. [2;7—earliest]; (2) Now you need to hold the basket.

c. relative clauses: (1) I see a man who plays football. [2;7—earliest]; (2) I bumped into people I went past and I bumped into those things.