

## 3.5 Communication and Language Development

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Total: 12 marks

### Objective

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Build the skills to answer exam questions on **language development** 语言发展.

You must be able to:

- name the stages from **babbling** 咿呀学语 to sentences
- state what **overgeneralisation** 过度概括化 shows about learning
- contrast a **learning** account with a **nativist** 天赋论 account
- explain the evidence for a **sensitive period** for language

### 1 Worked examples

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Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

#### ■ The sequence

**Babbling** includes sounds from many languages and narrows to the ambient one. Then single words, then two-word combinations with consistent order, then longer sentences with grammar.

#### ■ Overgeneralisation

A child who has said "went" begins saying "goed". This is not forgetting: the child has extracted a **rule** and is applying it too broadly. Errors of this kind are evidence of rule learning rather than imitation.

#### ■ Two accounts

A **learning** account emphasises imitation and reinforcement. A **nativist** account argues that children acquire grammar too fast, from input too incomplete, for imitation alone, and that the capacity is innately structured.

#### ■ A sensitive period

Children exposed to a language early acquire it fully; those first exposed much later typically do not reach the same grammatical mastery. This supports a sensitive period rather than an unlimited window.

## 2 Practice

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**2.1** Name three stages of early language development in order. [3]

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**2.2** Explain what overgeneralisation shows about how children learn grammar. [2]

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**2.3** A child who said "ran" now says "runned".

(a) State whether this is a step backwards. [1]

(b) Justify your answer. [1]

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## 3 Exam-style questions

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**3.1** Babbling in early infancy includes [1]

- **A** only sounds of the surrounding language
- **B** sounds from many languages, narrowing later
- **C** no consonants
- **D** complete words

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**3.2** The nativist argument rests mainly on the claim that [1]

- **A** children imitate adults exactly
- **B** grammar is acquired too fast from too little input for imitation alone
- **C** language is learned only after age seven
- **D** reinforcement explains all errors

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**3.3** A person first exposed to a language at 30 achieves fluent vocabulary but persistent grammatical errors.

(a) State what this pattern supports. [1]

(b) Explain why vocabulary and grammar may differ in this respect. [2]

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## 4 Go further

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- work through the **3.5 Communication and Language Development** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Development and Learning** section of the AP Psychology handout on the **Know** page.

## Solutions

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**2.1** babbling; single words; two-word combinations and then longer sentences.

**2.2** the child is applying an extracted rule too broadly, which shows rule learning rather than simple imitation.

**2.3** (a) no. (b) it shows the child has learned the regular past-tense rule and is applying it to an irregular verb.

**3.1 B.** babbling narrows toward the ambient language over the first year.

**3.2 B.** the poverty of the input relative to the speed of acquisition is the nativist argument.

**3.3** (a) a sensitive period for grammar. (b) vocabulary can be added throughout life as new items, while grammatical structure appears to depend on early exposure.