

3.5 Communication and Language Development

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 12 marks**

KEY WORDS language 语言 • babbling 咿呀学语 • nativist 天赋论 • overgeneralisation 过度概括化
• language development 语言发展

Objective

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

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

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

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

2.3 A child who said “ran” now says “runned”.

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

(b) Justify your answer. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Babbling in early infancy includes [1]

A	B
C	D

A only sounds of the surrounding language

B sounds from many languages, narrowing later

C no consonants

D complete words

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

A	B
C	D

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

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]
