

Lecture 4.1

1.58 developmental psycholinguistics

This term is often restricted to the development of language in children – what is also called 'child language acquisition'. I am using it in a much wider sense, to include development through the whole lifespan.

2.40 a little while ago

In Lecture 2.2, 23.38.

3.05 the average

It's important to emphasize that 12 months is indeed only an average. Some children learn their first words much earlier; some much later.

3.28 hear in the womb

Three months before birth is actually quite a conservative estimate. The three tiny bones in the middle ear (the malleus, incus, and stapes, known collectively as the auditory ossicles) begin to be formed as early as four to six weeks after conception, and are of adult size by eight months – the only bones in the body to be fully formed at birth. So they are probably transmitting sound to the foetus's brain even earlier than three months before birth. Further details can be found at:

<<http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=51723>>.

3.48 every other bone grows

Note that, if the bones did grow after birth, it would not be a good thing. The function of the ossicles is to amplify sound received at the eardrum so that it can be turned into electrical impulses. The larger the bones, the louder the sound (compare: the larger a musical instrument, the louder the sound). If the bones continued to grow, the sounds we hear would be increasingly amplified – with possibly disastrous results for our hearing.

4.27 recordings

Lecture Commentary

A remarkable video sequence of what the baby hears is at:

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxC2X2QqYJc>>.

5.09 listening through cotton wool

In fact the foetus is hearing sound through the fluid which surrounds it. Sound can transmit through water. And certain sounds transmit more readily than others, such as those deeper in pitch (compare: the sound of a beating drum that resounds through a house when other instruments are not so clearly heard).

5.26 prosody

This notion is introduced in Lecture 3.1, 6.48.

5.46 recognize the voice of the mother

Further detail about research in infant speech perception and recognition can be found on my blog:

<<http://david-crystal.blogspot.com/2010/01/on-language-and-colic.html>>.

7.44 first nine months

The various stages of first-year vocalization are discussed in greater detail in my *Listen to Your Child* (Penguin). There are now many clips on *YouTube* of babies making noises, but the labels assigned to them are often misleading, with terms such as 'babbling' being used for all types of vocalization.

7.58 start to coo

This is a stage characterized by short, cry-like vocalizations, with an open mouth and a usually falling (though often wavering) pitch pattern. The back of the tongue often makes contact with the roof of the mouth, producing velar and uvular sounds. Click-like sounds are heard (especially at the lips when these close), and variations in lip-shape while vocalizing give the impression of lip-rounding. It's presumably the combination of a back (velar, k-like) sound and lip-rounding that gave rise to the word 'coo' in the first place.

8.07 start to babble

Lecture Commentary

In this stage, there is clear evidence of developing syllabic sound patterns, typically sequences of plosives and open vowels (the classic 'bababa' pattern), but with a great deal of variation in consonant-like and vowel-like sounds, especially at the front of the mouth. This is the period when some sequences, sounding like 'mama' and 'dada', are falsely interpreted as meaningful by eager parents. As babbling develops, there is evidence that the selection of sounds is gradually influenced by the sounds used in the language the child hears around it.

8.31 that stress-timed rhythm

Illustrated in Lecture 3.1, 14.18.

8.42 syllable-timed rhythm

Illustrated in Lecture 3.1, 14.39.

9.44 turn-taking

The rules governing turn-taking seem to be in every language, as indicated by the research reported at:

<<http://www.mpi.nl/news/news-archive/universal-rules-in-turn-taking-in-conversation>>.

The two main rules are: avoid speaking at the same time, and avoid silence between turns. Babies learn this from around three months of age, as shown by the video analysis made by British researcher Colwyn Trevarthen and others, who called the cyclical exchanges 'proto-conversations'.

11.06 in a little while

The ludic dimension is discussed in Lecture 5.2, 22.26.

11.16 remember the term

From Lecture 1.1, 2.04.

11.40 babytalk

Lecture Commentary

Babytalk has several more technical designations, such as 'infant-directed speech', which is rather more specific than 'child-directed speech' or 'caretaker speech', both of which apply to the kind of adult speech used to young children of any age. The popular labels 'motherese', 'fatherese', and 'parentese' are also used. The phenomenon is an important aspect of the study of child language acquisition, and should not be dismissed as a simplified way of speaking, as it actually uses some quite complex sound effects, as illustrated in the lecture. There are other features of babytalk, too, such as reduplicated forms (eg 'bow-wow' for a dog), but these aren't used at the newborn stage. Babytalk sometimes receives a controversial press, as there is a popular view that to speak to children in this way is going to harm their language development. There's no evidence that this is the case, and the universal nature of the phenomenon (no language/culture has yet been found that doesn't use some sort of babytalk) rather argues against it.

13.32 the intonation examples earlier

In Lecture 3.1, 8.27.

16.34 senescence

For a medical account of senescence, see the site at:

<<http://www.biologyguide.net/bya7/bya7-16-12.htm>>.

Note that I am talking about the normal process of aging here, not the disorders that can occur, such as aphasia and dementia, in which language is severely affected.

Lecture 4.2

18.03 the approach is very, very different

Philology (often called 'comparative philology') as an academic subject began in the late 18th century, and focused on the study of Indo-European languages as presented in their written records, and especially in their literatures. It is characterized by an older terminology and methodology that has to some extent been replaced by the terms and techniques of modern linguistics. Historical linguistics has a much broader remit, studying all languages, in spoken as well as written form, and interested in establishing the universal processes that account for language change.

18.20 origins of language

The dating of the origins of speech is inevitably uncertain. Much depends on which aspects of language are being discussed – whether some general concept of communication, a notion of language in a developed brain and expressed perhaps through hand gestures, or the use of the vocal tract to produce speech. The formation of a vocal tract capable of producing an adequate range of sounds seems to be a relatively recent development, associated specifically with *Homo sapiens*, though everything depends on how we interpret the fossil evidence, and some have argued that Neanderthals (before 100,000 years ago) were capable of some form of speech.

18.46 development of the writing systems

When I refer to 10,000 or more years ago, I'm thinking of the earliest precursors of writing – such as the clay tokens used as an early accounting system, which have been found in the Middle East and dated to around 8000 BC. Some of these are illustrated at:

<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/macloo/418008366>>.

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Earlier tally systems – such as cutting notches in a stick – long pre-date clay tokens.

The development of modern writing systems is seen around 5000 years ago in several parts of the world:

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/themes/writing/historic_writing.aspx>.

19.02 a language like English

A range of texts illustrating the historical development of English can be seen at:

<<http://www.bl.uk/timeline>>.

19.57 earlier

In Lecture 1.2.

20.03 swearing

Swearing in English is given a social historical perspective in a book by Geoffrey Hughes called *Swearing: A Social History of Foul Language, Oaths and Profanity in English*:

<<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Swearing-History-Language-Profanity-English/dp/0140267077>>.

20.04 terms of address

A useful collection of articles on the history of terms of address is at:

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=4zocJp7ZCJ0C&pg=PA2&lpg=PA2&dq=terms+address+history+english&source=bl&ots=cWmuRZqZSb&sig=L5Df3YkkaFSE9O_Sm3re23yNU0s&hl=en&ei=YuHXTJayK4GV4AbO0LnsBw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5&ved=0CDIQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=terms%20address%20history%20english&f=false>.

20.12 a little ways

In more formal English, this phrase would only appear as 'a little way'. The combination of 'a' with 'ways' is a usage that developed in late Middle English, found in such phrases as 'a good ways' and 'a long ways', and later in a variety of forms,

Lecture Commentary

such as 'each ways', 'this ways', 'leastways', and 'anyways', where formal English would require the s-less form. Many regional dialects retain the s-forms, and my usage is probably the result of dialect background plus an informal lecturing style.

20.16 the 'tu/vous' example

As discussed in Lecture 1.2, 23.11.

21.11 that scene

Hamlet Act 3 Scene 1.

22.38 you would insult a noble person

The best example of this in Shakespeare is in *Twelfth Night*, Act 3 Scene 2, when Sir Toby Belch advises Sir Andrew Aguecheek how to write a letter challenging Cesario (the disguised Viola) to a duel: 'Taunt him with the licence of ink. If thou 'thou'-est him some thrice it shall not be amiss.' To call a gentleman 'thou' would really be an insult. (Notice that Sir Toby uses 'thou' to Sir Andrew also – a veiled reference to his low opinion of him.)

23.44 false friends (*faux amis*)

A collection of English false friends from Shakespeare's time is available on the website accompanying my book *Think on my Words* (Cambridge University Press): <<http://thinkonmywords.com>>.

Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on 'False Friends'. Examples of false friends in Spanish can be seen at:

<<http://spanish.about.com/cs/vocabulary/a/obviouswrong.htm>>.

For German, see:

<<http://german.about.com/library/blfalsef.htm>>.

For French, see:

<http://www.orbilat.com/Languages/French/Vocabulary/French-English-False_friends.html>.

25.45 more radically different

Old English used far more inflections to express grammatical relationships (such as subject and object) than we find in Modern English. Many of these inflections disappeared towards the end of the Old English period, and their function was replaced by an increased reliance on word order.

25.54 letters there that don't exist any more

See the Old English alphabet at:

<<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/oldenglish.htm#oe>>.

26.17 didn't come until much later

Even in a dictionary as late as Dr Johnson's (1755), we find 'i/j' and 'u/v' conflated. So, for example, we find at the beginning of his letter I such words as 'jabber' and 'jack', and 'umbrella' and 'unabashed' appear under letter V.

26.23 changes in capitalization, changes in punctuation, many changes in spelling

Jonathan Swift, writing in 1706, followed the fashion of his time to capitalize all common nouns: 'In antient Time, as Story tells, / The Saints would often leave their Cells [...]'. The fashion died out later in the century. Punctuation changes can be seen in the way some nouns, especially those ending in a vowel, formed their plural with an apostrophe before the 's', as in 'comma's' and 'echo's' – a practice that is strongly condemned today. You'll find those examples in Dr Johnson's dictionary of 1755, along with such spellings as 'raindeer', 'villany', 'comick', and 'downfal'. A great deal of orthographic change has taken place in the past 250 years.

26.54 a rhyme that doesn't work

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Act 3 Scene 2, Puck at one point says: 'Then will two at once woo one – / That must needs be sport alone'. The lines do not rhyme in Modern English, because the pronunciation of the word 'one' has changed. Today it rhymes with 'on', but in Shakespeare's day it rhymed with 'alone'.

27.05 you look at the spellings

Lecture Commentary

In the original printing of *Romeo and Juliet*, the word 'film' is spelled 'philome', suggesting that it was pronounced 'fillum' – much as we hear today in some regional accents (such as Irish English).

27.17 many people writing books

There was great interest in the way English words were spelled in the 16th and 17th centuries, and several writers (such as John Hart and William Bullokar) described contemporary pronunciation as part of their arguments about the need to reform and standardize spelling.

27.38 O for a Muse of fire ...

These are the opening lines of Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

28.50 preserve the tongue that Shakespeare spoke

This is an allusion to lines from William Wordsworth ('England, 1802'): 'We must be free or die, who speak the tongue / That Shakespeare spake'. See the full poem at:

<<http://www.bartleby.com/101/526.html>>.

28.55 Dr Johnson

He says this in the Preface to his Dictionary, at a point where he is criticising academies (such as the French Academy) for trying to prevent language change. The quotation runs in full: 'sounds are too volatile and subtile for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength.'

29.24 present continuous

This form of the verb is also called the present progressive.

29.53 I'm lovin' it

The McDonald's campaign began in 2008. A report on contemporary grammatical change in English can be seen at:

<<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/floblob.html>>.