Part I: Stages of acquisition

Listen to the recordings of a child at various points during the first three years of life that are in the “Child Speech” folder on our WebCT site. There are five files in this folder, labeled “a”, “b”, “c”, “d”, and “e”. You will of course need to access these files on a computer that has speakers or headphones, and the computer must have a media player such as Windows Media Player or QuickTime Player which can play files in wav format (most computers have one of these already installed).

On the answer sheet at the end of this document, you will need to match each sound file to an age and to one of the following descriptions:

- #1 Two-word: Produces a phrase consisting of two words.
- #2 Babbling: Some clear consonant-vowel sequences. No apparent meaning.
- #3 One-word: Produces single word to name object. As frequently happens at this stage, the child’s word here consists of two identical syllables, even though the adult word does not have this property.
- #4 Produces multi-word utterances.
- #5 Pre-babbling: Vocalization, but no clear consonant-vowel sequences.

Part II: Producing consonant clusters

One of the first things that children need to do when they learn a language is to figure out what the inventory of contrasting sounds in that language is, and as we have seen, this is a more difficult task than one might think at first. What we have not seen yet is that children also need to figure out what sequences of sounds are permissible in their language. In this exercise, we will get a taste of the complexities that the child has to deal with in this domain. We will see that even though children don’t always do things in the adult way, they do exhibit interesting regularities in their speech production. The errors that they make are not just random, but instead follow a pattern and make some sense.

We will focus here on the possible clusters of consonants at the beginning of words. We will use the term “consonant cluster” to mean a sequence of two or three consonants.

The following are some words spoken by a 2½-year-old child, written in phonetic symbols (in brackets). The intended word is given in ‘single quotation marks’ in ordinary spelling.

- [twa] ‘straw’
- [no] ‘snow’
- [glæs] ‘glass’
- [blæki] ‘Blacky’ (her dog)
- [tap] ‘stop’
- [bwain] ‘Brian’
- [tap] ‘top’
- [pun] ‘spoon’
- [twen] ‘train’
- [twit] ‘street’
- [kai] ‘sky’
1. Which adult consonant clusters appear to be disallowed in this child’s speech? What does the child pronounce instead of these consonant clusters?

Focus just on the consonant clusters at the **beginning** of the word. Do not concern yourself with the pronunciation of the vowels, which are mostly adult-like.

2. Does the child produce any consonant clusters that are not used in adult speech in English? If so, list them. Again, focus just on the consonant clusters at the **beginning** of the each word.

3. In question 1, you should have come up with several statements of modifications that the child makes to consonant clusters. Now look over these statements, and collapse them into just two general statements that subsume all of the cases observed.

4. How would you expect this child to pronounce the following words? The vowels and some consonants are given for you; you just need to add the consonants at the beginning of the word (using phonetic symbols).

   - ‘space’ [\es]
   - ‘great’ [\et]
   - ‘brown’ [\awn]
   - ‘split’ [\lt]
   - ‘strike’ [\ayk]

**A note about phonetic symbols:**

As is standard practice in analyzing child language, we are concerned here only with **sounds**, not with **letters**. Young children, after all, learn their language just by hearing it. They don’t learn spelling until long after they have figured out the sounds. We represent these sounds using phonetic symbols. It turns out that the phonetic symbols for consonants that you will need here all look and sound exactly like the letters you are already familiar with (e.g. [s], [g], [b], etc.). The symbols for the vowel sounds look more exotic, but you won’t need to do anything with those.

If you are curious, you can see a full list of English consonants (with their phonetic symbol, sample words, and pronunciation) at:

http://hctv.humnet.ucla.edu/departments/linguistics/VowelsandConsonants/vowels/chapter6/soundsvowels.html

**Print out the following two pages, write your answers on them, and turn them in in class.**

**If you are unable to print, follow the format below as closely as possible. Make your answers clear and legible.**
Part I: Stages of acquisition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sound file</th>
<th>Description #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 mo.</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 mo.</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 mo.</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 mo.</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 mo.</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate the sound files by their letter (a, b, c, d, and e). Indicate the descriptions by number (1-5).

Part II: Producing consonant clusters

You will probably not need to use all of the blank spaces here. Do not be concerned about this. Just use however many you need.

1. Instead of the adult consonant cluster _________, the child produces _________.
   Instead of the adult consonant cluster _________, the child produces _________.
   Instead of the adult consonant cluster _________, the child produces _________.
   Instead of the adult consonant cluster _________, the child produces _________.
   Instead of the adult consonant cluster _________, the child produces _________.
   Instead of the adult consonant cluster _________, the child produces _________.
   Instead of the adult consonant cluster _________, the child produces _________.
   Instead of the adult consonant cluster _________, the child produces _________.
   Instead of the adult consonant cluster _________, the child produces _________.

2. Consonant clusters not used in adult speech:

_________________________________________________________________
Name __________________________________

3. Two general statements:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

4. How would the child pronounce:

‘space’ [ es]
‘great’ [ et]
‘brown’ [ awn]
‘split’ [ It]
‘strike’ [ ayk]