

# Development of speech perception

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Research had identified the foremost accomplishment of infancy and early childhood, and they are referring to language development. The milestones of linguistic achievement have been documented across cultures and suggest that infants follow a set of universal stages both in speech production and speech perception. On the stages in speech production shown by young infants in American English and other languages; a universal progression from cooing (1 to 4 months), to babbling (5 to 10 months), to meaningful speech (10 to 18 months) is shown (Ferguson, Menn, & Stoel-Gammon, 1992).

Visual and auditory development is related with the development of speech perception. Infant vision is not that developed when they are born. They can see blurry vision but enable them to perceive familiar faces from unfamiliar ones. The infant is somewhat farsighted and has some degree of astigmatism because the retina is not yet fully developed. Newborn babies tend to have poor fixation capability, they have limited ability to discriminate color, limited visual fields, and an estimated visual acuity of somewhere between 20/200 and 20/400. (<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Education/infant/>)

Although visual progressions with infant are not that fully developed, it has been noted that they can recognize familiar faces already, especially with their mothers compared with strangers. As their visual perception improves, they begin to identify familiar faces especially the immediate families and began to respond by smiling to them. Infants started to become aware of his environment and begin to explore his world by gazing and started to become amazed with different colors especially the brighter ones compared before that they only see things in black and white.

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Aside from the visual perception, auditory system plays a vital role in speech development. Auditory system is more matured compared with visual system. It even started when baby is still inside the womb, when they recognize various sounds inside the womb and even outside his environment like people voices, shower, and music. Thus, both visual and auditory leads to speech perception, and this even started when they are still fetuses, inside their mothers' womb. Fetuses can even recognize their mothers' voice, but not that familiar with their fathers' voices.

When the mother tells a story and sings to her unborn baby, when the baby is born and hears the story and music he hears he becomes familiar to it, and prefers to listen over and over again. It simply explains that familiarity to certain aspect plays an important role to infants learning. Newborns way of reacting to certain situations is through actions and making sound. When they are hungry or wet, they cry to let the mothers know what they need. When they like something they starts to smile and coo (like ah's and oh's).

As infants started to grow, their speech also developed. They even began to babble, imitating how people speak. Their first few words could be "mama" or "dada" because they are already familiar with these words, and they are able to adapt and be able to express it by themselves. They can even respond to comforting tones, can distinguish recognizable voices and also responsive to changes in tone of voice, and to sounds other than speech. By the time they become toddlers, they can now speak and be able to convey what they want.

Most of the words they know comes from the people within the environment, thus a good environment is encouraged to enable toddlers to learn "good"

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words. Because what they hear mostly, they adapt it and learned from it. Toddlers enjoy listening to music and even sing and dance to it. They like hearing stories and when accompanied with different tones of voice they become more amazed to it. They can already distinguish different body parts, and can name pictures in the book when asked. By the time they are already 3 - 4 years old, they tend to ask questions and become more interested with several things.

They begin to explore their own world by role playing, interacting with other kids and even conversing with adults. They start to combine 4 - 5 words and can make simple sentences. (" Child Development, p. 1067) now clearly express how they feel because they can already convey how they feel and they are easy to understand. When kids reached the age of 4 or 5, basic vocabulary and grammar have already been learned, this will continue to develop especially when they started to go to school.

New words will be learned, although they are bombarded with more words they are able to perceive and learn from it. Slowly, their speech system has made a progress within few years. Families and environment are important factors in shaping one's character through his speech. Speech not only pertains to what is being said rather it can also affect one's character. A good character shines through his words, if it is filled with goodness and love, thus wisdom through his words could be attained to it.

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