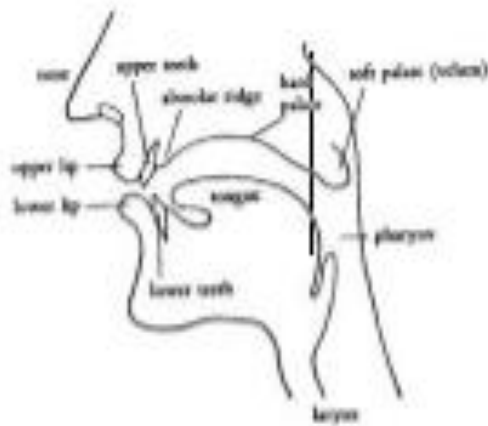




# CHILD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION Revision Guide



# Competing Language Acquisition Debates:

## 1. Nativist Theory (Noam Chomsky):

Those who believe that humans have an inbuilt capacity to acquire language coined as the **Language Acquisition Device (LAD)** by Chomsky.

Arguments For:	Arguments Against:
<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience the same stages of development and at the same pace</li> <li>• Resist correction</li> <li>• Create forms of language that adults don't use (overgeneralisations)</li> <li>• Make their own rules for language use that seem to understand that all languages have grammatical rules</li> <li>• Produce correct language when surrounded by 'impoverished' faulty adult-speech i.e. with false starts, incomplete utterances</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop overgeneralising and learn to use language correctly as with irregular verbs</li> <li>• Need input to give them more skills than grammar e.g. pragmatic understanding</li> <li>• Children who have been deprived of social contact can't achieve complete communicative competence</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relevant studies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berko's 'wug' test suggests children apply grammatical rules (1950s)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Relevant studies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• studies of Genie (a girl deprived of social contact until she was 13 and then unable to learn speech beyond a very basic level) and feral children support the 'critical period' hypothesis that says that language needs to be acquired within a certain time frame. This challenges Chomsky's early argument that the ability to acquire language is simply innate within us as it shows that some interaction is needed for language competency.</li> </ul>

## 2. Behaviourist Theory (B.F. Skinner):

Language is acquired through imitation and reinforcement.

Arguments For:	Arguments Against:
<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imitate accent and dialect</li> <li>• Learn politeness and pragmatic aspects of language</li> <li>• Repeat language they have heard around them and incorporate it into theirs – lexical knowledge must be gained from being told the right labels</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do more than just imitate language and can form sentences that they have never heard before</li> <li>• Hear ungrammatical spoken language around them but can still learn correct language</li> <li>• Do not seem to respond to correction</li> <li>• Aren't negatively reinforced for language use</li> <li>• Aren't always corrected by parents for incorrect grammar</li> <li>• Corrections might actually slow down development</li> <li>• Imitate but don't necessarily understand the meanings</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Other limitations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'fis' phenomenon suggests that children can hear and understand the correct pronunciation but simply can't produce it themselves at that stage (Berko and Brown, 1960s)</li> <li>• Research was conducted on rats and pigeons, not on humans</li> </ul>

## 3. Social Interactionist Theory (Jerome Bruner, Lev Vygotsky):

Child language is developed through interaction with adults.

Arguments For:	Arguments Against:
<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routine/rituals seem to teach children about spoken discourse structure such as turn-taking</li> <li>• Pragmatic development suggests that children do learn politeness and verbally acceptable behaviour</li> <li>• Role-play and pretend play suggest that more interaction with carers can affect vocabulary</li> <li>• As parents use child-directed speech with children, you can witness them responding. This is a form of 'scaffolding' a term coined by Vygotsky</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children from cultures that do not promote interaction with children (e.g. Samoa) can still become articulate and fluent language users without adult input</li> </ul>

<p><b>Relevant studies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Halliday’s research into the functions of language supports the importance of social interaction</li> <li>• Vincent, a hearing child born to deaf parents, learned to communicate using sign language. As a hearing child, he enjoyed watching television but he ignored the sounds. He did not start to speak until he went to school where people talked to him.</li> </ul>	
--	--

#### 4. Cognitive Theory (Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget):

Language acquisition is part of a wider development of understanding that develops.

Arguments For:	Arguments Against:
<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can’t grasp aspects of language until they are ready; stages of development support this</li> <li>• Produce utterances which increase in complexity as they work towards mastering a rule</li> </ul> <p><b>Relevant studies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brown’s morphemes</li> <li>• Bellugi’s stages for pronoun and question formation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With cognitive difficulties can still manage to use language beyond their understanding</li> <li>• Acquire language without having an understanding of it, especially in the early stages of development</li> <li>• ‘fis’ phenomenon suggests children’s cognitive understanding can be present but their physical development still impacts their ability to use language</li> </ul>

#### 5. Usage-based approach (Tomasello)

Language acquisition is achieved because of two things that humans can do. We can:-

- Find patterns (grammatical, lexical and so on)
- Read the intentions behind language

The theory suggests that children base their utterances on what they’ve used before and what is used with them by their carers. They are not really copying though because mistakes are often made and they produce combinations that they would not have heard. What they are doing, according to this approach, is joining together ‘chunks’ or fragments of language, a bit like jigsaw puzzle pieces. Sometimes they fit, sometimes they don’t.

This theory can be seen as having elements of two out of four of the ‘big 4’ – children need language *input* which is ‘scaffolded’ (Social Interactionist approach) to make progress – the language has to be geared towards them and they don’t learn off the TV, and they also need to understand why something is being said (pragmatics); it has some element of *innate* ability – the ability to find the patterns in grammar and apply them to new situations

Arguments For:	Arguments Against:
<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce fragments of language earlier than expected</li> <li>• Tend to use language that has been used with them in some form</li> <li>• Children's invented words (e.g. 'bashment' for a smashed shell)</li> </ul> <p><b>Relevant studies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brown's morphemes – when they <b>break</b> this sequence, doing something 'too early' for Brown's sequence</li> <li>• Tomasello's study of Annie</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some virtuous errors seem still to be based on a deeper understanding of grammar (see Chomsky's 'universal grammar' concept). E.g. 'Me want tissue lounge' has a Subject Verb Object Adverbial construction. Everything fits into grammatical 'slots'</li> </ul>

## Developing Phonology:

### 1. Pre-Verbal Stage:

Stage	Features	Approx. age (months)
Vegetative	Sounds of discomfort or reflexive actions	0 – 4
Cooing	Comfort sounds and vocal play using open-mouthed vowel sounds	4 – 7
Babbling	Repeated patterns of consonant and vowel sounds	6 – 12
Proto-words	Word-like vocalisations, not matching actual words but used consistently for the same meaning (sometimes called 'scribble talk'). For example, using 'mmm' to mean 'give me that' with accompanying gestures such as pointing, supporting the verbal message	9 – 12

### 2. Phonemic Expansion vs. Phonemic Contraction:

- **Phonemic Expansion:** the variety of sounds produced increases
- **Phonemic Contraction:** the variety of sounds is reduced to the sounds of the main language used

### 3. International Phonetic Alphabet:

There are **6 different types of consonant**:-

- **Plosives:** created when the airflow is blocked for a brief time (voiced - /b/ /d/ /g/; unvoiced - /p/ /t/ /k/)
- **Fricatives:** created when the airflow is only partially blocked and air moves through the mouth in a steady stream (voiced - /v/ /ð/ /z/ /ʒ/; unvoiced - /f/ /θ/ /s/ /ʃ/)
- **Affricatives:** created by putting plosives and fricatives together (voiced - /dʒ/; unvoiced - /tʃ/)

- **Approximants:** similar sounds to vowels, only voiced (/w/ /r/ /j/)
- **Nasals:** produced by air moving through the nose, only voiced (/m/ /n/ /ŋ/)
- **Laterals:** created by placing the tongue on the ridge of the teeth and then air moving down the side of the mouth, only voiced (/l/)

There are **short** and **long vowels**. **Vowels** are made without closure or audible friction.

**Diphthongs** are vowels in which there is a perceptible change in quality during the syllable.

#### 4. Early Phonological Errors:

Term	Explanation	Examples
Deletion	Omitting the final consonant in words	Do(g), cu(p)
Substitution	Substituting one sound for another (especially the 'harder' sounds that develop later, such as /ʃ/)	'pip' for 'ship'
Addition	Adding an extra vowel sound to the ends of words creating a CVCV pattern	Doggie
Assimilation	Changing one consonant or vowel for another (as in the early plosive sounds /d/ and /b/). Usually use a consonant found later in the word.	'gog' for 'dog'
Reduplication	Repeating a whole syllable	Dada, mama
Consonant cluster reductions	Consonant clusters can be difficult to articulate so children reduce them to smaller units	'pider' for 'spider'
Deletion of unstressed syllables	Omitting the opening syllable in polysyllabic words	'nana' for 'banana'

## Developing Lexis:

### 1. Categorising First Words:

Katherine Nelson (1973) identified **4 categories** for first words:

- **Naming** (things or people)
- **Actions/events**
- **Describing/modifying things**
- **Personal/social words**

### 2. Content vs. Function Words:

- **Content words:** a type of word that has an independent 'dictionary' meaning, also called a lexical word.
- **Function words:** a word whose role is largely or wholly to express a grammatical relationship.

### 3. Reinforcement:

- **Positive reinforcement:** when a behaviour is rewarded including verbal praise to encourage this behaviour to be repeated.
- **Negative reinforcement:** when an undesirable behaviour is unrewarded with the intention that it will not be repeated.

### 4. Vocatives:

- A form (especially a noun) used to address a person e.g. *Mummy*

## Developing Semantics:

### 1. Underextension and Overextension:

- **Underextension:** a feature of a child's language where the word used to label is 'reduced' to include only part of its normal meaning e.g. *duck* to refer to fluffy cartoon ducks but not used to refer to the brown ones in the local pond.
- **Overextension:** a feature of a child's language where the word used to label something is 'stretched' to include things that aren't normally part of that word's meaning. **Leslie Rescorla** divided overextensions into **3 types**:

Type	Definition	Example	% of Overextension
Categorical overextension	The name for one member of a category is extended to all members of the category	'apple' used for all round fruits	60%
Analogical overextension	A word for one object is extended to one in a different category usually on the basis that it has some physical or functional connection	'ball' used for a round fruit	15%
Mismatch statements	One-word sentences that appear quite abstract; child makes a statement about one object in relation to another	Saying 'duck' when looking at an empty pond	25%

### 2. Hyponymy:

The **hierarchical structure** that exists between lexical items:-

- **Hypernym:** a superordinate i.e. a word that is more generic or general and can have more specific words under it e.g. *colour*
- **Hyponym:** a more specific word within a category or under a hypernym e.g. *red*

### 3. Aitchison's Stages of Children's Linguistic Development:

Number	Stage	Description
1	Labelling	Linking words to the objects to which they refer understanding that things can be labelled
2	Packaging	Exploring the labels and to what they can apply. Over/underextension occurs in order to eventually understand the range of a word's meaning
3	Network-building	Making connections between words, understanding similarities and opposites in meanings

### 4. Piaget's Stages of Children's Linguistic Development:

Stage	Age (years)	Key elements
Sensorimotor	0 – 2	The child experiences the physical world through the senses and begins classifying the things in it; lexical choices, then they appear, tend to be concrete rather than abstract. Object permanence develops – the concept that objects exist when out of sight.
Pre-operational	2 – 7	Language and motor skills develop and become more competent. Language is egocentric – either focussed on the child or used by the child when no-one else is around.
Concrete operational	7 – 11	Children begin thinking logically about concrete events
Formal operational	11+	Abstract reasoning skills develop

## Developing Grammar:

### 1. Morphology:

**Morphology** is the study of **word structure**:-

- **Free morpheme:** one that can stand alone as an independent word e.g. *apple*
- **Bound morpheme:** one that cannot stand alone as an independent word but must be attached to another morpheme/word (e.g. affixes such as the plural '-s')
- **Inflectional morphology:** the alteration of words to make new grammatical forms (adding inflections to words creating tense, grading adjectives, showing possession, making plurals)
- **Derivational morphology:** the creation of new words by adding prefixes and suffixes (make up new words and converting words from one word class to another)



## 2. Stages of Lexical and Grammatical Development:

Stage	Descriptors	Grammatical constructions	Age (months)
One-word/ holophrastic	One-word utterance (holophrase has pragmatic meaning)		12 – 18
Two-word	Two words combined to create simple syntactical structures	Subject + Verb Verb + Object	18 – 24
Telegraphic	Three or more words joined in increasingly complex and accurate orders	Subject + Verb + Object Subject + Verb + Complement Subject + Verb + Adverbial	24 – 36
Post-telegraphic	Increasing awareness of grammatical rules and irregularities	Instead of saying 'runned', using 'ran'	36+

## 3. Roger Brown's Meaning Relations: (Two-word stage)

Meaning relation	Explanation	Example	Context
Agent + action	Someone performing an action	Daddy kick	Dad kicks ball
Agent + affected	Someone doing something to an object	Me ball	Child kicks ball
Entity + attribute	A person/object described	Kitty big	Sees tigers in zoo
Action + affected	An action affecting an object	Throw stick	Child throws stick
Action + location	Action occurring in a certain place	Sit chair	Child sits on chair
Entity + location	Object located	Spoon table	Spoon is on the table
Possessor + possession	Object having a possessor	Daddy coat	Points to dad's coat
Nomination	Person/object is labelled	That cake	That is a cake
Recurrence	An event repeated	More ball	Finds second ball
Negation	Something denied	No ball	Has lost her ball

## 4. Ursula Bellugi's Stages of Negative Formation: (Telegraphic stage)

Stage	The child:	Example
1	Uses 'no' or 'not' at the beginning or end of a sentence	No wear shoes
2	Moves 'no'/'not' inside the sentence	I no want it
3	Attaches the negative to auxiliary verbs and the copula verb 'be' securely	No, I don't want to go to nursery I am not

## 5. Ursula Bellugi's Stages of Pronoun Development: (Telegraphic stage)

Stage	The child:	Example
1	The child uses their own name	Tom play
2	The child recognises the I/me pronouns and that these are used in different places within a sentence	I play toy Me do that
3	The child uses them according to whether they are in the subject or object position within a sentence	I play with the toy Give it to me

## 6. Virtuous Errors vs. Overgeneralisations:

- **Virtuous errors:** syntactic errors made by young children in which the non-standard utterance reveals some understanding, though incomplete, of standard syntax e.g. *I runned for I ran*
- **Overgeneralisations:** a learner's extension of a word meaning or grammatical rule beyond its normal use e.g. *house > houses, mouse > mouses*

## 7. Roger Brown's Stages of Morpheme Acquisition:

Term	Example
Present tense progressive	-ing
Prepositions	In, on
Plural	-s
Past tense irregular	Run/ran
Possessive	's
Uncontractible copula	Is, was
Articles	The, a
Past tense regular	-ed
Third person regular	Runs
Third person irregular	Has
Uncontractible auxiliary verb	They were running
Contractible copula	She's
Contractible auxiliary	She's running

## Developing Pragmatics:

### 1. Halliday's Functions of Speech:

Function	Where language is used to:
Instrumental	Fulfil a need (e.g. 'want milk')
Regulatory	Influence the behaviour of others (e.g. 'pick up')
Interactional	Develop and maintain social relationships (e.g. 'love you')
Personal	Convey individual opinions, ideas and personal identity (e.g. 'me like Charlie and Lola')
Representational	Convey facts and information (e.g. 'it hot')
Imaginative	Create an imaginary world and may be seen in play predominantly (e.g. 'me shopkeeper')
Heuristic	Learn about the environment (e.g. 'wassut?')

## 2. Dore's Language Functions:

Function	Description:
Labelling	Naming a person, object or thing
Repeating	Repeating an adult word or utterance
Answering	Responding to an utterance of another speaker
Requesting action	Asking for something to be done for them
Calling	Getting attention by shouting
Greeting	Greeting someone or something
Protesting	Objecting to requests from others
Practising	Using language when no adult is present

## 3. Egocentric Speech:

- The running discourse style of speech used by children where no listener is directly addressed and the talk is focussed on the child's activities.

## Child Directed Speech:

Any of various speech patterns used by parents or care givers when communicating with young children, particularly infants, usually involving simplified vocabulary, melodic pitch, repetitive questioning and a slow or deliberate tempo.

### 1. Key Features:

- **Repetition and/or repeated sentence frames**
- **A higher pitch**
- **The child's name rather than pronouns**
- **The present tense**
- **One-word utterances and/or short elliptical sentences**
- **Fewer verbs/modifiers**
- **Concrete nouns**
- **Expansions** (the development of a child's utterance into a longer, more meaningful form)
- **Recasts** (the commenting on, extending and rephrasing of a child's utterance)
- **Yes/no questioning**
- **Exaggerated pauses giving turn-taking cues**

### 2. Language Acquisition Support System (LASS):

- This refers to the child's interaction with the adults around them and how this interaction supports language development. **Jerome Bruner** researched this looking at ritualised activities that occur daily in young children's lives (mealtimes, bedtimes, reading books) and how carers make the rules and meanings of these interactions explicit and predictable so that children can learn.

### **3. Scaffolding:**

- The process of transferring a skill from adult to child and then withdrawing support once the skills has been mastered.

## Anthology of Transcripts

This is the question you will always be asked:-

### Section A – Child language acquisition

You are advised to spend about 40 minutes on this section.

Read **Text A** in your **Resource Booklet** and answer the following question.

**1** Using the appropriate terminology to explain your findings, examine the language development stage of both participants as evidenced in the transcript. You should identify and analyse the phonology, grammar and meaning of their utterances.

Use your knowledge of theories and concepts of child language acquisition to support your answer.

[20]

Reminder of the relevant Assessment Objectives:-

AO1	Ao2	
Language Frameworks/Language Methods (applied appropriately); terminology, how well you write	Concepts: child language (theories – Behaviourism, nativism, social interactionism, cognitivism, usage/constructivist); gender, power	Context: who, how old, where, and how that affects the language used  (Still important despite the marks!)
Grammar  Semantics – over/under extension; hypernyms hyponyms  Lexis  Pragmatics  Phonology  Graphology  Discourse  Applied systematically (ie you use them at the right time)	Speech: CDS; stages – holophrastic, 2 word, telegraphic, post-telegraphic; virtuous errors; scaffolding; zone of proximal development;  Power: who's in charge – politeness, face, powerful participant etc  Gender: who talks most? Interrupts? What do they talk about?	Eg if at home, part of a ritual (eg dinner time, bedtime?)  Age of the child?  How comfortable are they?

## How to tackle this question...

1. Annotate the data, **looking for patterns**. Think of the four main theories, plus the other peripheral ones, like the work of Vygotsky, and, with these in mind, use the main language levels/methods to work through the data:-
  - Lexis and semantics – including word classes used, ways the meanings of words are understood by the children... Overextension etc is relevant here.
  - Grammar – what stage is the child at? Any virtuous errors used? Can you apply innatism and Chomsky anywhere?
  - Phonology (**don't miss this out!**) – what patterns of usage can you find, if any. Look for virtuous errors. Is there a logic to them? (e.g. swapping one hard voiced consonant for another easier voiced consonant). Any suggestion that the child might have an accent and have picked up a pronunciation from a parent? (Could be an argument for behaviourism/imitation theory)
  - Pragmatics – look at the meanings of the whole of the child's utterances (rather than individual words). What do they mean by what they say. Remember the *functions* of particular utterances – is there some interesting implied meaning. Consider politeness, power, face theory
  - Discourse structure – who controls the topic? Any interruptions? Particular uses of imperatives, questions and so on. Is the child working through a schema of some kind (a model that they have learnt from experience)
  - Input theory – to what extent is there evidence that the language produced by the child has been guided by a parent, or by their environment, their Language Acquisition Support System, by rituals and so on. If there is more than one child, is there evidence that they are scaffolding the language of the other child? If there is an adult, look at whether the child's utterances are achieved in response to guidance from the adult (e.g. responding to a sentence frame from the adult)
  - Cognitivist theory – look at the concepts that are being handled by the child, the way they understand the meanings of words and utterances
  - Vygotsky – internal monologues (links back to imaginative function – see pragmatics, above) – is the child speaking as they think?
  - Power and gender – check to see if these are relevant. Who is in the more powerful position and how do they display that power linguistically. Is a boy or girl displaying what you would regard as typical characteristics?
2. In every case, above, always link back to the **context**. That means the age of the child, the kind of discourse that is going on, the precise context of individual lines. Use that to evaluate your point. Use the theories to help evaluate too.
3. Start writing, using the following structure...

Introduction:-

Consider the overall context of the conversation and how that might affect the language production. Pin down the overall stage of the child or children and the main thrust of your analysis

Paragraph model – theoretical approach

- What theory are you using
- What have you found
- What is your *pattern* of evidence (one example will do if that is all you can find)
- Specific piece of evidence, drawn from a pattern if you can
- Analysis, using terminology
- Evaluate the level to which the theory works and the extent to which context is important

Paragraph model – linguistic level/method approach

- Which linguistic level are you applying
- What have you found
- What is your *pattern* of evidence (one example will do if that is all you can find)
- Specific piece of evidence, drawn from a pattern if you can
- Analysis, using terminology
- Evaluate the level to which the theory works and the extent to which context is important

Of course, this is only a guide. You might be led by a contextual point, or decide to single out a particular child and look at, say, their grammatical development and then do the same for the other.

Four paragraphs is probably the best you can hope to achieve in the time

Text A is a transcript between Emily and Ethan from a private data source. Emily is five years and five months old; Ethan is two years old. Emily is involving Ethan in a game about school.

Emily: okay (.) hang on (2) you're coming as well (.) now hold my hand (.) hold my hand

Ethan: /baɪ/ [why]

Emily: in you go

Ethan: it's home

Emily: is it (.) it's home time (.) d'you have a good day at school

Ethan: yeah

Emily: come on (.) let's (.) you want a ice cream

Ethan: /aɪs/kin/ [ice-cream]

Emily: come on (.) come with me (.) your school are doing a sale (.) what book do you want

Ethan: (*inaudible*)

Emily: you want the book about ice cream (.) come on then (.) let's go back to your school

Ethan: /kæz/ ma /bul/ [back my school]

Emily: oh (.) go and get your bubbles (.) it's a fair (2) come on

Ethan: /hould/ /hænd/ [hold hand] (3) /'bʌb/bu/ [bubble] (2) /wi/ [whee]

Emily: oh (.) you left your bubbles (.) don't worry I'll go back to the fair and fetch them (.) you go  
indoors (1) here are your bubbles

#### TRANSCRIPTION KEY

(.) micropause

(1/2/3) pause in seconds

IPA has been used to indicate non-standard pronunciation.



## Model Answer to Ethan and Emily transcript

In this text we can see the two children playing co-operatively. They are playing a pretending game, using Halliday's imaginative function of language.<sup>1</sup> "It's a fair" showing the child Emily to be capable of imaginative thought and to be the leader of the play because she is the oldest.<sup>2</sup> Her power is also shown by how she has the longest utterances and controls the path the games takes by being the one using imperatives "hold my hand" and interrogatives "What book do you want?"<sup>3</sup> This is likely to be mostly due to her age but possibly because she has been in school for about a year and therefore has experience with other children in social situations.<sup>4</sup>

Firstly, and most obviously, we see Ethan struggling with phonology and pronunciation. He has trouble with the interrogative "Why?" finding the "w" sound difficult to make. This is because it requires more advanced breath control than he has. He also struggles with the noun "ice-cream", specifically the "cream" part. This is because of the consonant cluster "cr" being another sound difficult to make.<sup>5</sup> Despite his struggles, he generally makes himself understood, perhaps not so well when he tries to say "back to my school" but this once again is because of his trouble with consonant clusters.

Grammatically both children are relatively sound in their understanding, particularly Emily. She shows herself to be able to confidently communicate with other children as shown by her co-operative behaviour "don't worry I'll go back". This is a feature that gender theorists noticed in female children playing, they tend to co-operate while boys for the most part will compete.<sup>6</sup> Emily says "Your school are doing a sale" seemingly using the wrong version of the verb 'to be'. It should technically be "Your school is doing a sale" but her versions make sense and it is a virtuous error because it sees the school as a collective of people.<sup>7</sup> Another feature of grammar that Emily portrays is her use of contractions and negatives.<sup>8</sup> It was Bellugi that theorised that children learn negatives in three stages, first of all putting "no" or "not" at the beginning or end of a sentence, then by moving the negative to the inside of a sentence and finally correctly learn to use auxiliaries with the negative.<sup>9</sup> Bruner's theory on contraction blends with this, arguing that children will often learn to use the contraction of a word first. This is shown in Ethan's speech as well as he says "it's home". Emily has many examples of using contractions, "d'you", "lets" and "you're" are good examples. She uses all of them

<sup>1</sup> Clear link drawn between theory and practice.

<sup>2</sup> Consideration of power.

<sup>3</sup> Links to useful examples from the data.

<sup>4</sup> Sustained reference to the practice in the data.

<sup>5</sup> Good linguistic and conceptual knowledge applied to the data. References the process of phonological acquisition and the influence behind it.

<sup>6</sup> Data linked to gender/acquisition concepts clearly.

<sup>7</sup> Explores the example clearly and suggests possible reasons for the virtuous error (if indeed it is one).

<sup>8</sup> A promising area to focus on.

<sup>9</sup> Learned knowledge that may have been better applied to the data.

correctly apart from "d'you" which is a contraction of "do you" when it should be the past tense of the verb "do" – "did".<sup>10</sup> Besides this, Emily's grasp of contractions shows that children do the bulk of their linguistic learning by imitating their parents and carers.<sup>11</sup>

Stage theory is something that is widely known and accepted as a theory of child language acquisition. It does however, have its flaws, namely that it assumes that children all learn at exactly the same rate and they stop learning or learn one thing at a time. It also doesn't account for environmental factors. Despite this, if loosely applied, it can help identify a child's development.<sup>12</sup> For example, it is clear that for the most part Ethan is at the two word stage because of his use of two word utterances used to express himself or describe an agent and an action. "It's home" or "ice-cream", though this must of course be taken with a grain of salt. Although it seems that Ethan is at the two word stage, he exhibits an utterance that suggests he is entering into the telegraphic stage "back my school" is a traditionally telegraphic stage as it misses out a function word, the verb "to".<sup>13</sup> Missing function words are what describe the telegraphic stage and show Ethan to be exhibiting these traits. Emily is much more advanced, being at the post-telegraphic stage as she confidently uses prepositions "in you go", pronouns "your school are..." and using synonymy in everyday language "... and fetch them" as opposed to "... and get them".<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Links contracted forms clearly to the data for both children.

<sup>11</sup> Is there enough evidence for such a strong assertion?

<sup>12</sup> Learned knowledge not linked to data.

<sup>13</sup> Secure consideration of grammatical stage that weighs up the data in a tentative manner.

<sup>14</sup> Sound point on Emily's stage linked to the data. May have benefitted from being linked to discussion of negation earlier on.

It is noteworthy that although Emily is only 5 years old, she seems to be exhibiting features of child-directed speech to the younger child. This supports the social interactionist theory of child language development proposed by Bruner.<sup>15</sup> Bruner says that children learn language through their interactions with others and by having conversations scaffolded by adults. This is perhaps why Emily speaks in such a way, because she thinks that this is how you talk to those younger than you. One of the features of child directed speech she exhibits is imperatives "hold my hand (.) hold my hand" which is likely to have been said to her by a parent or carer, the role she is seemingly playing in this game. She also uses open questions which encourage a child to speak more "what book do you want", as well as tag questions which teach and encourage turn-taking, "d'you have a good day at school?" It is hard to tell if Emily is actually exhibiting features of child-directed speech or if she is just copying how adults talk to her.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, this data is interesting and raises many questions about the theories of children's speech.

In summation, the data both supports and challenges several theories and ideas about children's language development. Both Ethan's non-conforming to stage theory and Emily's tentative use of child directed speech raise questions about the thoroughness of these theories and how applicable they are to a range of children.<sup>17</sup> Ethan and Emily will both be able to continue to develop their speech, reading and writing skills throughout their lives and will only continue to learn as they progress in school and age.

<sup>15</sup> Perceptive link between the data and concepts showing secure understanding.

<sup>16</sup> Wide ranging consideration of the evidence for CDS in Emily's speech and a potential reason for its use.

<sup>17</sup> In a conclusion that gains little extra credit, this section does suggest an ability to use conceptual models tentatively when exploring real data.

## Principal Examiner's Comments and marks:

*This is a strong response which covers a good range of features from the data and is securely rooted in a consideration of stages and concepts.*

*AO1: The response makes reference to a wide range of terminology and is consistently, barring one lapse, accurate. The level of analysis is at times developed but perhaps not focused enough for full marks. 9/10*

*AO2: Assured references to stages are made when considering grammar and there is a sense of the response weighing up the usefulness of these stages which suggests exploration. There is a secure understanding of contexts and how to apply them to the data. 9/10*

*Total: 18/20*

Level	AO1	Mark	AO2	Mark
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assured reference to a wide range of language features, with appropriate and well-selected examples which support a focussed analysis.</li> <li>The response will be enhanced by consistently accurate use of a wide range of appropriate terminology; writing is in a secure academic register.</li> </ul>	9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response will make assured reference to stages of development explained and explored effectively, with well-selected examples.</li> <li>The response will make discerning/perceptive links to theory or concepts in a way that suggests assured understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.</li> </ul>	9–10
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response will make consistently accurate and sustained reference to a range of language features, with appropriate examples and developed analyses.</li> <li>The response will make consistently accurate use of a range of appropriate terminology to enhance the response; written expression is coherent.</li> </ul>	7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response will make consistently accurate reference to stages of development with appropriate examples and an analysis which demonstrates awareness of the complexity of the processes involved.</li> <li>The response will consistently connect the elements of the participants' language usage with a variety of concepts/ theories in a way that suggests secure understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.</li> </ul>	7–8
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response will make generally accurate and developed reference to language features from the three levels specified in the question, with appropriate examples.</li> <li>Accurate use of appropriate terminology will enhance the response; written expression is clear.</li> </ul>	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response will make generally accurate reference to stages of development, with appropriate examples and supporting comment or explanation.</li> <li>The response will connect the elements of the participants' language usage with concepts and theories in a way that is valid and relevant.</li> </ul>	5–6
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response will identify some relevant language features, though only exploring two out of the three levels specified in the question, with appropriate examples and relevant comments.</li> <li>Appropriate terminology will be used accurately, although the range of terminology will be limited; written expression has some errors but the meaning remains apparent.</li> </ul>	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response will make some accurate reference/s to stages of development, with some explanation or appropriate examples.</li> <li>The response will make valid connections between elements of the participants' language usage and concepts or theory.</li> </ul>	3–4
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response will accurately identify features of the material, but will make very few relevant or valid points about these features. The response may cover only one of the language levels specified in the question.</li> <li>Little or no accurate use of appropriate terminology; writing may at times obscure meaning.</li> </ul>	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response will make little or basic reference to stages of language development.</li> <li>Few if any valid links between elements of participants' language and appropriate stage/s of development or other relevant concepts.</li> </ul>	1–2
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No response or no response worthy of any credit.</li> </ul>	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No response or no response worthy of any credit.</li> </ul>	0

## Three More Examples of Transcripts

### SECTION A – Child language acquisition

#### Text A

**Text A** is a transcript from a private data source. Emma aged four and ten months is talking to her mother. Initially Emma is making something.

**Mother:** come on then

**Emma:** no (.) it not sticking on

**Mother:** well I think you need to stick the smooth side down and not the side that's got bumps on (1.0) that's enough water

**Emma:** done

**Mother:** good girl (3.0) who did you play with at school today

**Emma:** Alice (1.0) Harry (2.0) Aysha and also (1.0) Ella (.) that's all of it

**Mother:** that's all of them (1.0) did you play any sports

**Emma:** PE

**Mother:** tell me some of the sports (.) what about after school

**Emma:** we play in the /dɑ:den/ [garden] (.) we /d/əʊ/ [go] on the trampoline (1.0) we /st/ (*incomplete utterance*) (.) that's all

**Mother:** that's all (1.0) hmm (.) what sort of books did you read

**Emma:** /dɒd/ [dog] books

**Mother:** dog books//

**Emma:** //yeah

**Mother:** what do you like about dog books

**Emma:** they're /f un/ [fun]

**Mother:** they're /f un/ [fun]

**Emma:** yeah

**Mother:** do you like dogs

**Emma:** yeah

**Mother:** do you like other animals

**Emma:** yeah

**Mother:** what sort of other animals

**Emma:** horses (.) /pidz/ [pigs] (.) /wɔ:θɒdz/ [warthogs] (.) (*both laugh*) /dɒnt i:z/ [donkeys] (.) ponies (.) chickens (.) /leɪn/ [laying] /edz/ [eggs] (1.0) all of it

#### TRANSCRIPTION KEY

(.) micropause

(1/2/3) pause in seconds

//overlapping

IPA has been used where necessary to indicate non-standard pronunciation

**Texts A** is a transcript of Leila (2 years, 5 months), in her grandmother's garden, supervised by Jan, her grandmother's friend.

Leila: [*trying to climb onto a garden chair*] on (.) on (.) chai::r  
 Jan: (3.0) you going to sit on the chair  
 Leila: yus (.) up [*frustrated sounds*]  
 Jan: come on then (.) where is where is Iggle going to sit  
 Leila: oh (.) oh (.) what's tha:t 5  
 Jan: what IS that (1.0) what do you think  
 Leila: it's (.) is it (.) NOISY  
 Jan: it's very noisy (.) it's the water (3.0) it's going down the pipes (3.0) where shall we sit  
 Leila: I've got sticky hands (.)  
 Jan: you got sticky hands again (1.0) 10  
 Leila: oh dear me  
 Jan: oh dear (.) that's from the bubbles isn't it  
 Leila: oh dear me  
 Jan: do you want to wipe your hands (2.0) good girl (4.0) that's it (3.0) are you going to sit  
 up (.) do you want some help 15  
 Leila: yeah  
 Jan: (5.0) let me help you because I don't want you to fall off (2.0) they're big chairs aren't  
 they (3.0) there we go  
 Leila: they are big chairs  
 Jan: they ARE big chairs (1.0) right okay 20  
 Leila: that's nice (.) push me in  
 Jan: push you in  
 Leila: yeah  
 Jan: there you are (2.0) that's good (4.0) now are you going to have yours (.) and is Iggle  
 going to have his 25  
 Leila: I I (.) I'm wiping my fingers  
 Jan: you're wiping your fingers good idea (1.0) what about mine  
 Leila: they all wight  
 Jan: they're all right (.) okay (.) thank you  
 Leila: [*Iggle Piggle' voice*] I've got sticky hands 30  
 Jan: he's got sticky hands as well that's it wipe his hands as well (2.0) is his face sticky (2.0)  
 oh he's lovely and clean now (.) that's better  
 Leila: [*Iggle Piggle' voice*] oh no (.) sticky hands (1.0) sticky hands  
 Jan: what's he been doing (.) why's he got such sticky hands (1.0) what's he been up to  
 Leila: he's got he's got grass on them 35  
 Jan: [*laughs*] grass on them (.) he's got grass on them (.) where did he get that from (1.0)  
 [*sing-song intonation*] he must have been playing when we weren't looking (4.0) do you  
 think he was  
 Leila: yeah

The key below applies to **Texts A** and **B**.

**Key:** (.) indicates a normal pause.  
 Numbers within brackets indicate length of pause in seconds.  
 :: indicates elongated sounds.  
 Words in capitals indicate an increase in volume.  
 Other contextual information is in italics in square brackets.

**Text A** is transcript of Joe (3 years) interacting with the people and things around him. It is Joe's birthday and he has just opened his presents. These include two talking toys: Buzz Lightyear (a space ranger) and Woody (a cowboy).

Joe: those /baʔriz/ go in there  
Dad: yeah they do (.) let's in the front then I'm done  
Joe: why you not using that one  
Dad: I don't need that one | mister man I need that one now |  
Joe: what's that one for (2.0) and that | one (1.0) what's this 5  
[*sounds from box*]  
Dad: careful (10.0) [*putting batteries in toy*]  
Joe: sharp sharp sharp (.) it's sharp  
Dad: be REALLY careful (.) do THESE batteries first  
Joe: they need these /baʔriz/ (2.0) oh what are those 10  
Dad: you can have this one (15.0) you have can have it in a minute (10.0) got to put  
the cover back on (.) that one please (5.0) right let's put the cover back on (2.0)  
Joe: I know where this is (10.0) [*singing*] what's that Buzz then doing here (.) what's  
that Buzz (2.0) we need a helmet /wait/ now (2.0) he's gonna oh there's Buzz  
Dad: give to daddy (2.0) there look 15  
Toy's voice: **I'm Sheriff Woody**  
Joe: I shoot the baddie  
Toy's voice: **yee-hah**  
Joe: yee-hah  
Dad: hold on a minute 20  
Joe: he go yee-hah  
Aunt: yee-hah  
Joe: he go yee hah (.) he says YEE-HAH [*Aunt laughs*]  
Toy's voice: **I'm Sheriff Woody**  
Joe: yee-hah (8.0) turn it [*laughs*] yee-hah (.) making a mess 25  
Toy's voice: **looks like we've got an unwanted visitor in town**  
Joe: MY DAD [*laughs*]  
Dad: just got to do this one Joe  
Toy's voice: **oh Buzz your spaceship is over there**  
Joe: oh Bazz 30  
Dad: don't press it don't pull it too hard mate  
Toy's voice: **oh Buzz I mean mister space ranger**  
Joe: bister space ranger  
Toy's voice: [*laughs*] **oh Buzz you've got a lot to learn about being a cowboy**  
Joe: a pace /weɪəl/ [*laughs*] 35  
Toy's voice: **looks like we've got an unwanted visitor in town**  
Joe: way in town (.)  
Aunt: do you want to put your badge on Joe  
Joe: oh yep (.) it Bob the Builder  
Aunt: shall I put it on your top now (3.0) and that tells everyone that you're three today 40  
Joe: it's my badge [*singing*] Bo the Builder can you fix it (.) Bo the Builder can you fix it  
Toy's voice: **oh okay time for this here Woody to take a little nap see yah**  
Joe: [*lies down with toy*] wee-yah yee-hah (.) Bo the Builder (.) it is is is is is  
Buzz Lightyear badge

**Transcription Key:**

(.) indicates a normal pause.  
Numbers within brackets indicate length of pause in seconds.  
// indicates a phonemic transcription.  
Toy's voice is represented in bold.  
Words in capitals indicate an increase in volume.  
? is a glottal stop.  
Other contextual information is in italics in square brackets.  
Words between vertical lines are spoken simultaneously.

**Text A** is a transcript of Jess (3 Years) with her mother. They are making a jigsaw.

### Text A

Mum: where does this one go  
Jess: I not know  
Mum: you do  
Jess: where  
Mum: erm (.) where they go 5  
Jess: what you do like that  
Mum: where does this one go (.) where does this one go Jessie  
Jess: it go in middle  
Mum: in the middle  
Jess: yeah 10  
Mum: where's the nurse (.) where's that one  
Jess: what  
Mum: what about that one (.) where's the nurse one  
Jess: I not know  
Mum: where does that one go (.) does it go there [*Jess shakes her head*] it is (.) look (.) 15  
there it is  
Jess: no:: (.) I put em in the middle (.) I do em  
Mum: shall we do their middles now (.) their tummies  
Jess: yeah  
Mum: where does that one go 20  
Jess: look he got em there (.) got / piswɔmən /<sup>1</sup> (.) put them middle up there (.)  
Mum: you going to put them together  
Jess: yeah (.) no (.) them not go there  
Mum: can you see where he goes (.) is that the clown  
Jess: yeah (.) see which one tis (.) I get head together 25  
Mum: what are you doing  
Jess: heads together  
Mum: putting their heads together (.) get their heads together  
Jess: you put heads together ( ) put their heads together

The key below applies to **Texts A and B**.

**Key:** (.) indicates a normal pause.

Numbers within brackets indicate length of pause in seconds.

:: indicates elongated sounds.

Other contextual information is in italics in square brackets.

/ / indicates a phonemic transcription.

Footnote indicates the target word.

## Dealing with child language acquisition data

In the exam, you will be given a transcript of one or more children's speech. The age range of the children participating will be 0–7 years. There may be one or more child; there may or may not be adults, older children, or teenagers present and included in the transcribed conversation as well.

There will always be an invitation to identify a range of language features, relating to CLA, and to explore these in terms of underpinning theories and concepts. In other words, you will need to assess the child's/childrens' linguistic development in terms of the words and constructions they use, and you will also need to link these to appropriate theories or approaches. When identifying language features you will need, specifically, to consider phonology, grammar and meaning; ideally, this will involve referring to the relevant stages of language development.

Here is an example of the way that this part of the exam is likely to be worded:

### Task 1

Read the source material (Text D) provided and complete the following task.

Using the appropriate terminology to explain your findings, examine the language development stage of the three participants as evidenced in the transcript. You should identify and analyse the phonology, grammar and meaning of their utterances.

Use your knowledge of theories and concepts of child language acquisition to support your exploration. (20 marks allocated)

### Study tip

When you are looking at applying the work of theorists some of the important ideas you could consider are those of Chomsky, Skinner, Berko-Gleason, Bruner, Halliday and Piaget.

*Invitation to identify a range of language features relating to specific areas.*

*Exploration of specific features needs to be underpinned by discussion of relevant theories and concepts.*

### Text D

Ivy is two years and two months old; Cassie is four years and one month old; Laurie is 19 months old. The three children are playing with sand.

Ivy: I got lots and lots

Cassie: Ivy-/naivi:/(.) we can make a ice-cream with this (1) make a ice-cream with this (.) Ivy

Ivy: yeah (.) I can (2) that's actually for lollies

Cassie: I making a lolly

Ivy: sand lolly

### Transcript key:

(.) marks a short pause of less than a second

(1) marks a pause denoted by number of seconds

- IPA has been used to indicate aspects of pronunciation, followed by the standard spelling of the words in square brackets [ ]
- **Bold** indicates stressed word

Laurie: er (1)

Cassie: I making a lolly Ivy

Laurie: (*inaudible*)

Ivy: it's a **sand** lolly it's a sand lolly

Cassie: /kai/['kay]

Laurie: er (1) er (.) er (.) er (.)

Ivy: I... I'm going to make lots and lots of cakes (.) lots and lots of sand cakes (.) and then gonna (*inaudible*) /ba:ba:ba:ba:ba:/ (1) I make all of these sand cakes (.) I make (.)

Cassie: you make

Ivy: I put them here (2) all my sand cakes

Cassie: sand cakes



In order to analyse this transcript so that you can respond to the task effectively, it may be worth considering the following:

- What is the context of the speech that has been transcribed; where and why might it be taking place?
- What is the age of the participants?
- What stage(s) of language development seem to be evident in the transcript?
- Which utterances evidence this/these?
- If relevant, what is evident from the interaction between the participants?
- Are there any language features that seem to be particularly noteworthy? (Try to ensure that you've commented on each of the three language levels of phonology, grammar and meaning.)
- What light could your knowledge of theory and concepts throw on the speech that has been transcribed? (You should link your analysis to specific examples from the transcription.)

#### Activity 24

- a. Re-read the sample exam question and attempt to answer it. You should spend about 40 minutes on it in total.
- b. Read the mark scheme below. Now attempt to grade your own response. An extract from a student's sample answer (Sample answer 1) has been provided to give you further guidance.
- c. Swap responses with a partner. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of each other's work and comment on the initial grading.
- d. Finally, compare your response with the full version of the student's answer (Sample answer 2) on page XX. What can you learn from it? Identify some ways in which you can use it to improve your subsequent(s) attempt and write these out as bullet points that you can have in front of you next time.

(See page XX for commentary.)

## Mark scheme

Level	AO1	Mark	AO2	Mark
5	<p>Assured reference to a wide range of language features, with appropriate and well-selected examples which support a focused analysis.</p> <p>The response will be enhanced by consistently accurate use of a wide range of appropriate terminology; writing is in a secure academic register.</p>	9–19	<p>The response will make assured reference to stages of development explained and explored effectively, with well-selected examples.</p> <p>The response will make discerning/perceptive links to theory or concepts in a way that suggests assured understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.</p>	9–10
4	<p>The response will make consistently accurate and sustained reference to a range of language features, with appropriate examples and developed analyses.</p> <p>The response will make consistently accurate use of a range of appropriate terminology to enhance the response; written expression is coherent.</p>	7–8	<p>The response will make consistently accurate reference to stages of development with appropriate examples and an analysis which demonstrates awareness of the complexity of the processes involved.</p> <p>The response will consistently connect the elements of the participants' language usage with a variety of concepts/theories in a way that suggests secure understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.</p>	7–8

### - Sample answer 1

Ivy, aged two, makes use of repetition three times in the course of the conversation, applying the phrase 'lots and lots' to the lollies and 'sand cakes' she is making. Although her speech in some respects has moved beyond the telegraphic stage (she uses the relatively sophisticated adverb 'actually' and the prepositions 'to' and 'of'), she does omit the primary auxiliaries 'have' and 'will' in her utterances, 'I got lots and lots' and 'I make all of these sand cakes', reflecting that her language development can still be seen as being in the telegraphic stage.

## Sample answer 2

The transcript involves three children between the ages of one and three; the language development of each is different but they are still able to communicate effectively with each other. The youngest child, Laurie, appears to take a less active role, and only produces one utterance. Ivy and Cassie, as older participants, create a series of adjacency pairs between them that act as a commentary on what they are doing.

Ivy, aged two, makes use of repetition three times in the course of the conversation, applying the phrase 'lots and lots' to the lollies and 'sand cakes' she is making. Although her speech in some respects has moved beyond the telegraphic stage (she uses the relatively sophisticated adverb 'actually' and the prepositions 'to' and 'of'), she does omit the primary auxiliaries 'have' and 'will' in her utterances, 'I got lots and lots' and 'I make all of these sand cakes', reflecting that her language development can still be seen as being in the telegraphic stage.

The fact that the children are engaged in playing with sand lends itself to a use of concrete nouns by the older two: 'lollies', 'sand cakes'. Their deployment of language is imaginative in that the sand is being used to fashion objects that have been invented for the purposes of the activity, reflecting Halliday's identification of the imaginative function of language. There is some clarification between the two older children of what objects are being made – ice-cream, lollies and cakes are all mentioned. The capacity to combine the known concepts, sand and lollies, etc., in order to invent a new compound word 'sand-lollies' is interesting. Skinner suggested that children learn language through reinforcement and imitation. However, the chances are that the participants will not necessarily have heard this word before, so are not imitating it, but they may still be copying the process of compound word formation. They are also, in accordance with Berko-Gleason's Wug Test, applying standard suffixes to the 'new' word.

Laurie's utterances seem to be pre-verbal; this does not necessarily suggest her language development is limited but may perhaps suggest that she is very engrossed in what she is doing – more input would be needed to make a fuller observation. 