Development of Syntax in Young Children

Lexical Verb Development

As reported by parents on the Communicative Developmental Inventory (CDI) (Fenson, et. Al, 2007):

Age in Months	Mean # of unique verbs
21 months	10
24	37
27	85

Mean growth rate of 8 verbs/month (Hadley, Rispoli & Hsu, 2013)

Unique Subject Verb (USV)

Within 40 minutes of parent-toddler interaction (Hadley, 2014):

Age in Months	Mean # of USVs
21	2
24	8
27	24

Different combinations of sentence subjects and verbs increased from less than one every 10 min to more than one every 2 min during this 6-month period.

Developmental Sequence of USV:

- Sentences with first person subjects (i.e., I-sentences)
- Third person singular sentences (i.e., other-sentences)
- Second person and plural subjects

 At 24 and 27 months of age, 50% and 70% of the toddlers produced at least two USVs with both first and third person singular subjects. By 30 months of age, 100% of the toddlers in this database produced at least two USVs with both first and third person singular subjects (DeKalb cohort raw data).

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Tense Agreement (T/A)

The average toddler produces approximately two different T/A morphemes in 1 hr. of conversational language sampling at 24 months of age, increasing to nearly 10 sufficiently different uses of T/A morphemes by 30 months (Hadley, 2014).

By age 30 months:

100% of children in study	90% children in study	70% of children
➢ 1 T/A	➢ 3 T/A	➢ 5 T/A

Developmental Sequence (Rispoli, 2012)

- Copula BE (specifically is)
- Third person singular –s, –ed
- Auxiliary DO as a set
- Auxiliary BE

References:

Hadley, Pamela A. "Approaching Early Grammatical Intervention from a Sentence-Focused Framework." Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, April 2014, Vol. 45, 110-116. doi:10.1044/2014_LSHSS-14-0017

Rispoli, M., Hadley, P., Holt, J. (2012). Sequence and system in the acquisition of tense and agreement. Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 55, 1007–1021.

Fenson, et. Al. The MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories User's Guide and Technical Manual, Second Edition. Brookes Publishing, 2007.

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