

Infant-Directed Speech and Its Effect on Language Acquisition

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When infants are acquiring their first language, adults speak to them differently than they would speak to other adults. This kind of speech is formally named “Infant-Directed speech”, but is also referred to as “baby talk” and “motherese”. Infant-Directed (ID) speech has several properties that distinguish it from Adult-Directed (AD) speech. There is a debate over whether or not ID speech helps infants acquire language or is a hindrance in their language acquisition process. Several experiments have been performed to test the effect of ID speech on infants’ language learning. These experiments all used different properties of ID speech. Overall, the experiments have proved that ID speech helps infants acquire language better than AD speech for different reasons. Further studies can be performed on ID speech to learn more about its effects on second language acquisition and on different ages.

Background Information on Infant-Directed Speech

Soderstrom (2007) found that ID speech is present in most spoken languages. She also found that ID speech is characterized different properties that include prosodic, phonological, and syntactic properties. Prosodic properties of ID speech include higher pitch of the voice, varying the pitch of one’s voice, elongating vowels, and lengthening the pauses between words in a sentence. Many researchers suggest that these prosodic properties grab the

infants' attention and hold their attention. Phonological properties of ID speech include differences in voice onset time distinction and exaggerating certain words in a sentence. Soderstrom found varying opinions on whether or not the phonological properties were actually helpful in language acquisition. Syntactic properties of ID speech include shorter..... middle of paper role of infant-directed speech with a computer model. *Acoustical Society of America*, 4(4), 129-134. Cooper, R. P., & Aslin, R. N. (1990). Preference for infant-directed speech in the first month after birth. *Child Development*, 61(5), 1584-1595. Kaplan, P. S., Bachorowski, J., Smoski, M. J., & Hudenko, W. J. (2002). Infants of depressed mothers, although competent learners, fail to learn in response to their own mothers' infant-directed speech. *Psychological Science*, 13(3), 268-271. Kuhl, P. (2007). Is speech learning 'gated' by the social brain?. *Developmental Science*, 10(1), 110-120. Soderstrom, M. (2007). Beyond baby talk: Re-evaluating the nature and content of speech input to preverbal infants. *Developmental Review*, 27(4), 501-532. Thiessen, E. D., Hill, E. A., & Saffran, J. R. (2005). Infant-directed speech facilitates word segmentation. *Infancy*, 7(1), 53-71.

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