

English Language A Level

Introduction to Child Language Acquisition

Can you find the nouns, adjectives and verbs?

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe.

English Language A Level



Explore language as it is used in the world today

Paper 1

40%

Section A

Textual Analysis

(how texts create meanings and representations: 2 unseen texts, 7 language frameworks)

Section B

Child Language Acquisition

Paper 2

40%

Section A

Language Diversity and Language Change

Section B

Language Discourses (attitudes towards language)

Paper 2 topics areas: language and gender, occupational language, accent and dialect, World Englishes, language change over time, how language constructs identity

Non-exam assessment (NEA) 1: Language Investigation

10%

Choose an area of the course to conduct your own independent language research project

Non-exam assessment (NEA) 2: Original Writing + Commentary

10%

Choose a style model and create your own original piece of writing (short story, article, speech, webpage...). Write a commentary on the language decisions you made and why.

English Language A Level



Explore language as it is used in the world today

Paper 1 *Section A*

BHS

Textual Analysis
(how texts create meanings
and representations: 2
unseen texts, 7 language
frameworks)

Section B Child Language Acquisition

Paper 2 *Section A*

Language Diversity and Language
Change

Section B

Language Discourses (attitudes
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gender, occupational language, accent
and dialect, World Englishes, language
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BGS

Non-exam assessment (NEA) 1: Language Investigation

BHS

Choose an area of the course
to conduct your own
independent language
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Non-exam assessment (NEA) 2: Original Writing + Commentary

BGS

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of writing (short story, article,
speech, webpage...). Write a
commentary on the language
decisions you made and why.

English Language A Level



Explore language as it is used in the world today

Non-exam assessment (NEA) 1: Language Investigation

Choose an area of the course
to conduct your own
independent language
research project

How does English/Ukrainian code-switching help social relationships during online gaming?

How do Harris and Trump use language in the 2024 presidential debate to make claims to power?

How does the teacher use language to run a children's cookery class effectively?

How do women and men use language differently in digitally mediated communication (DMC), and why?

A diachronic investigation into representations of the Barbie brand in television advertising.

English Language A Level



Explore language as it is used in the world today

Non-exam assessment (NEA) 1: Language Investigation

Choose an area of the course
to conduct your own
independent language
research project

An investigation into the Sun newspaper's representations of male and female football teams after tournament defeats.

An investigation into how teenagers use language differently in mixed gender conversations.

An investigation into UK broadsheet newspaper coverage of the start of the national lockdown in March 2020.

An investigation into representations of Lucy Letby in broadsheet and tabloid journalism.

English Language A Level



Explore language as it is used in the world today

See the J6 website for more
information including careers:

<https://www.beverleyj6.co.uk/courses/english-language>

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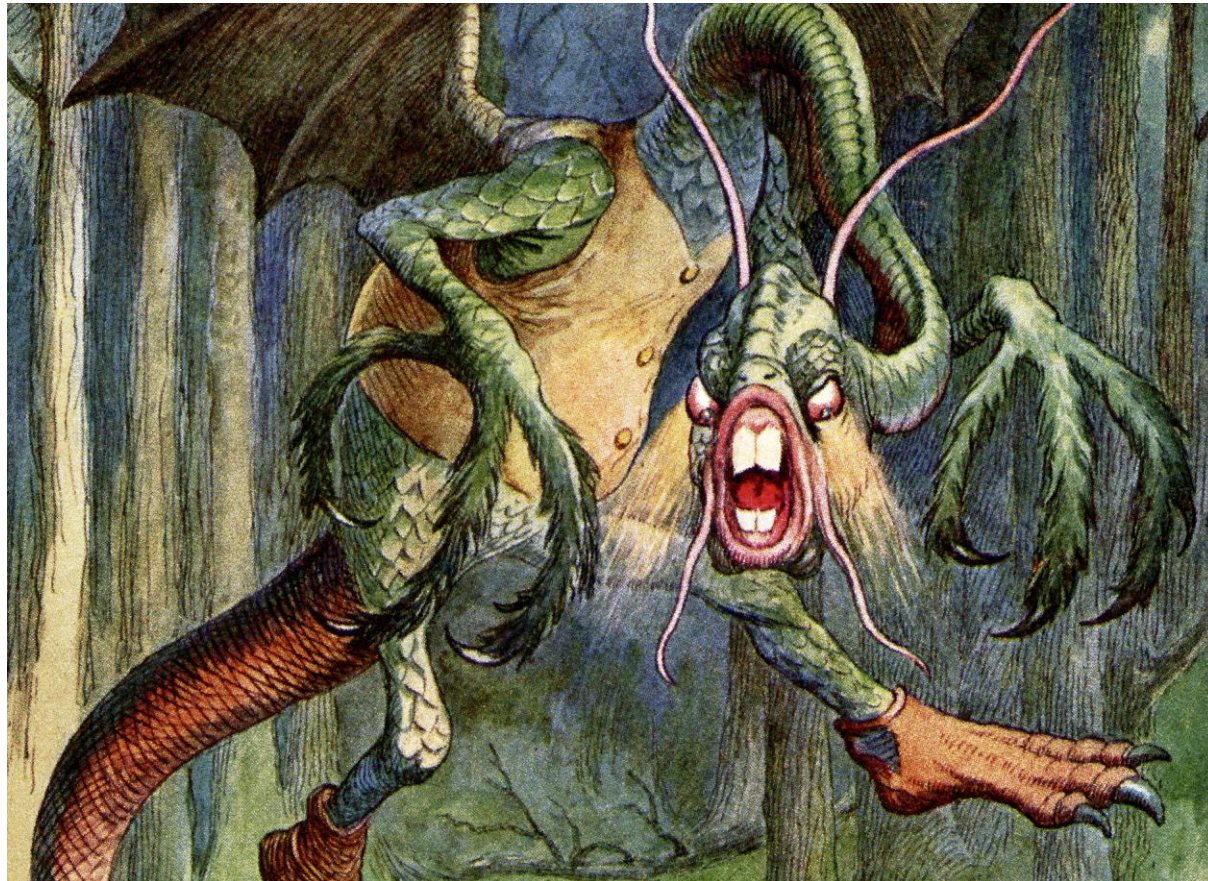
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Introduction to Child Language Acquisition

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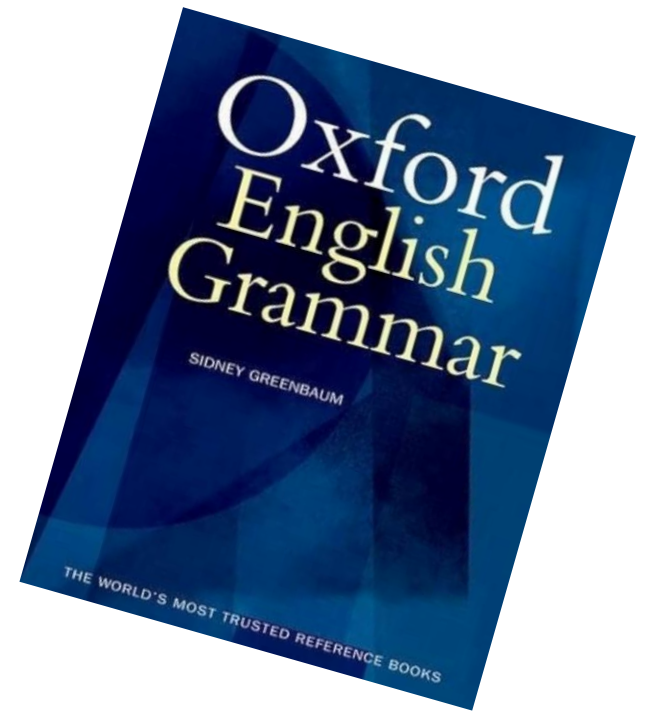
*I **gimble** my way down to the shops
in the **brillig** morning, to see my old
borogrove Dave.*

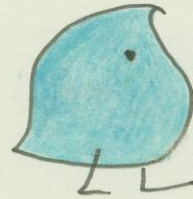
1. Choose a noun, adjective and verb of your choice.
2. Give each one a definition.
3. Create a sentence that includes your three words. (Feel free to change the tense of any verbs.)

Can anyone else understand it, through contextual clues...?

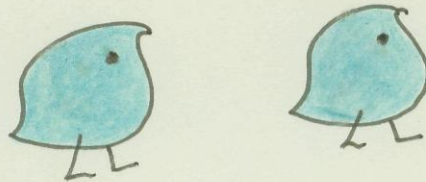
This activity shows that we have an understanding of **grammar**, the building blocks of language.

Young children also have this understanding, even though they haven't been explicitly taught...

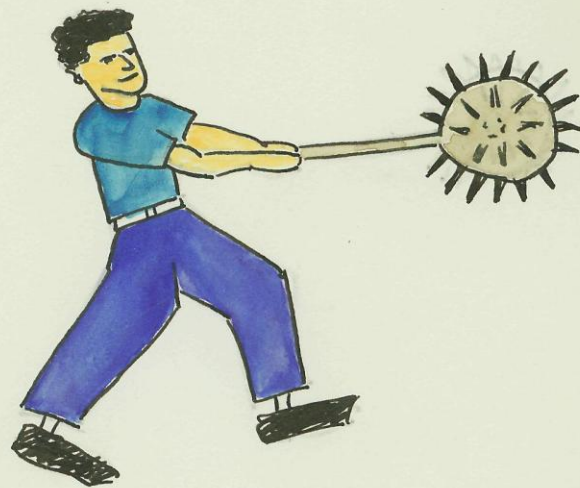




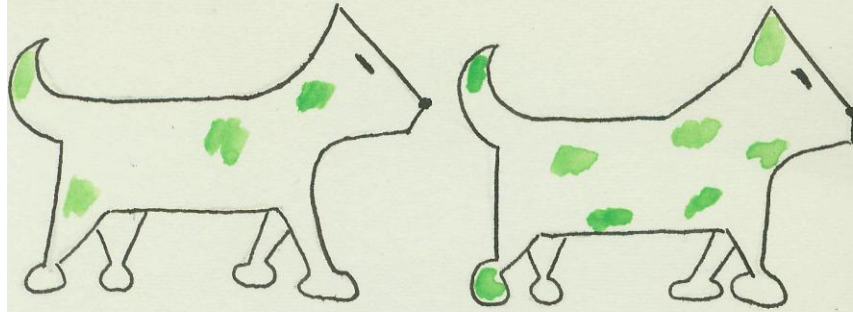
This is a WUG



Now there is another one.
There are two of them.
There are two _____.



This is a man who knows how to RICK.
He is Ricking. He did the same thing
yesterday. What did he do yesterday?
Yesterday he _____.



This dog has QUIRKS
on him.

This dog has more
QUIRKS on him.



And this dog has even more QUIRKS on him.

This dog is QUIRKY. This one is _____.

And this one is the _____.



This is a man who knows how to SPOW.
He is SPOWING. He did the same thing
yesterday. What did he do yesterday?
Yesterday he _____.

In 1958, Jean Berko Gleason created the test you have just completed – the Wug Test.

It was a linguistic tool comprised of a series of flashcards used to test how well children had learned the **morphemes** associated with:

- making nouns plural (-s)
- verbs past tense (-ed)
- superlative and comparative adjectives (-er, -est)

Children between 4-7 years old were tested.

76% of 4-5 year olds and 97% of 5-7 year olds could correctly use the -s ending for 'wug'.

The Wug test in action

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03LXJwyknqU>

Can a 16 month-old pass the Wug test?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKBOHYybtQY>

Their brains are
hardwired to do it

Through imitation and
positive reinforcement

So, how do children learn the
building blocks of language?

Through social
interaction



Through pattern
finding

NATIVIST

BEHAVIOURIST

So, how do children learn the
building blocks of language?

SOCIAL
INTERACTIONIST



USAGE-BASED

Evidence for NATIVIST theory

“Virtuous errors”

Why virtuous?



•Past Tense *-ed*

- fall → falled (fell)
- go → goed (went)
- break → broked (broke)
- sing → singed (sang)

•Plural *-s*

- man → mans (men)
- foot → foots (feet)
- tooth → teeths (teeth)
- person → peoples (people)

Evidence for BEHAVIOURIST theory

Accents

How are parents positively reinforcing their children's accents in these clips?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TwUVbDMQBg>



Evidence for SOCIAL INTERACTIONIST theory



Baby talk 101: How infant-directed speech helps babies learn language

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Share



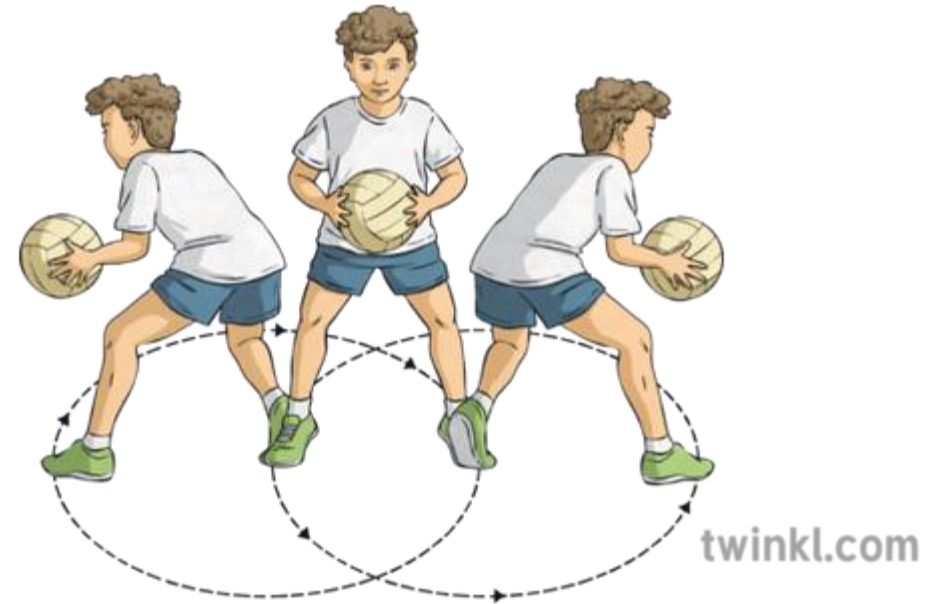
Whether you think it's cute, or it makes you squirm, "baby talk" is a compelling, scientific phenomenon. All around the world, people use a special register when they speak to the very young. This "infant-directed speech," or IDS, is recognizable for its higher pitch, and more melodic, emotionally-charged tone.

These features capture a baby's attention, and make it easier for him or her to grasp the emotional intentions of speech.



Evidence for USAGE-BASED theory

Pivot schemas *frame and slot patterns*



verb

teddy

object

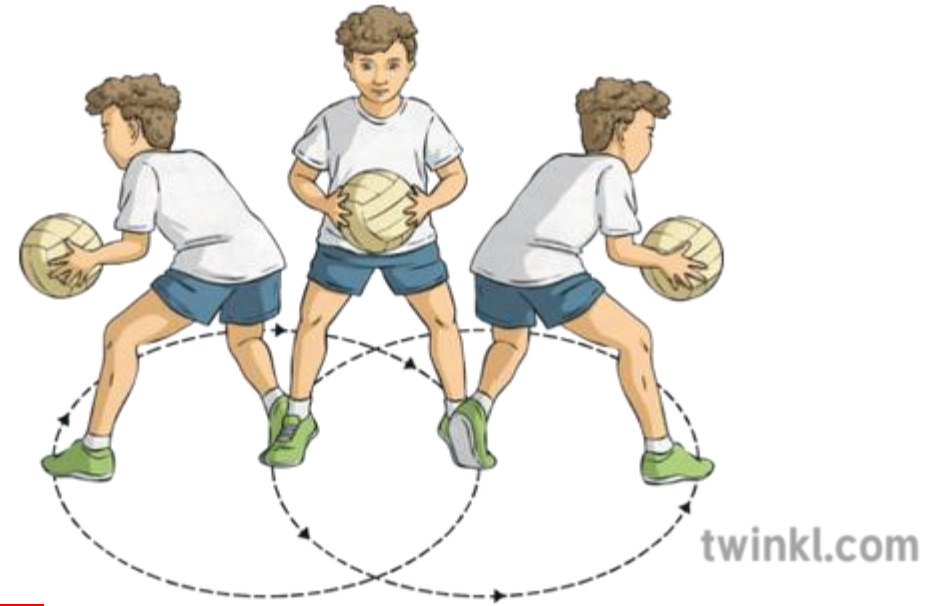
See...

doggy

daddy

Evidence for USAGE-BASED theory

Pivot schemas *frame and slot patterns*



subject

teddy

doggy

daddy

verb

see...

Putting it all together: spoken transcript

NATIVIST

Data Set 1

BEHAVIOURIST

Ruben, aged 5 years, is chatting playfully with his aunt and mother at home in his kitchen. His pet dog, Jasper, is with them.

Aunt:	would you rather eat a slug or eat a worm	
Ruben:	um (.) apple	
Aunt:	no would you rather eat a slug or a worm that's your choice	
Ruben:	okay slug <i>[laughing]</i>	
Aunt:	a slug okay good choice	5
Ruben:	<i>[laughing gleefully]</i>	
Aunt:	would you rather jump in freezing cold water or go down a gigantic slide	
Ruben:	um <i>[laughing]</i> jump in freezing water	
Aunt:	okay (1.0) would you rather kiss a frog or dye your hair pink	
Ruben:	dye my hair pink (2.0) would you rather eat a dog or slug	10
Aunt:	a dog	
Ruben:	bad choice	
Aunt:	<i>[laughs]</i>	

SOCIAL
INTERACTIONIST

USAGE-BASED

Putting it all together: spoken transcript

NATIVIST

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Ruben, aged 5 years, is chatting playfully with his aunt and mother at home in his kitchen. His pet dog, Jasper, is with them.

Aunt: would you rather eat a slug or eat a worm

Ruben: um (.) apple

Aunt: no would you rather eat a slug or a worm that's your choice

Ruben: okay slug *[laughing]*

Aunt: a slug okay good choice

5

Ruben: *[laughing cheerfully]*

Aunt: would you rather jump in freezing cold water or go down a gigantic slide

Ruben: um *[laughing]* jump in freezing water

Aunt: okay (1.0) would you rather kiss a frog or dye your hair pink

Ruben: dye my hair pink (2.0) would you rather eat a dog or slug

10

Aunt: a dog

Ruben: bad choice

Aunt: *[laughs]*

SOCIAL
INTERACTIONIST

USAGE-BASED

Garden path sentences...

(From the idiom, “to be led up the garden path”)

**What do these sentences mean?
Why are they misleading?**

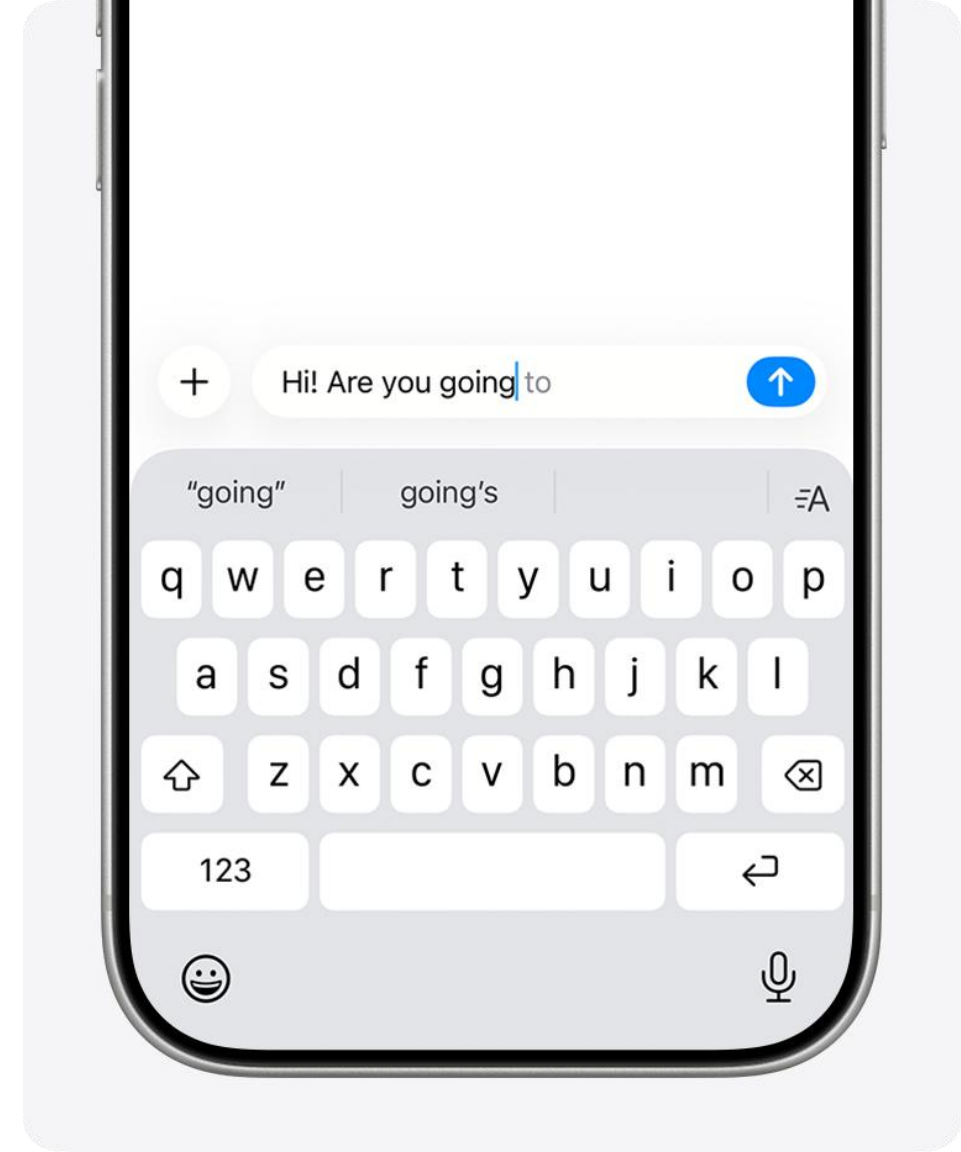
1. Fat people eat accumulates.
2. The old man the boat.
3. The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families.



This is also how AI learns using Large Language Models – it calculates the statistical probability of what the next word will be.

(Like a fancy version of predictive text.)

We also do this – and young children do it too, with surprising results...



Marks'n'spensive (Marks & Spencer)

Oopsaglua (superglue)

Spaghetti car bananas (spaghetti carbonara)

Snotrils (nostrils)

Strangled eggs (scrambled eggs - clearly the words sound very similar, and something drastic happened to those eggs so that makes sense)

Suggestive biscuits (digestive biscuits)

Dalek bread (garlic bread)

Discuss: do you or your family have any words like this?

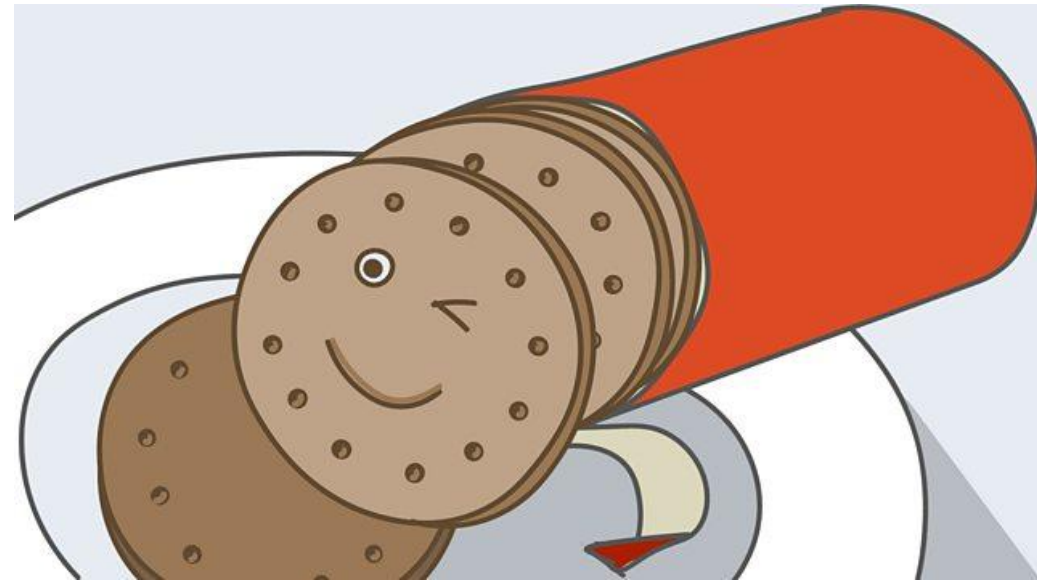
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3B79x5ZX5BVctr2WpzGbIYV/the-funny-words-that-kids-invent>

When children are reaching for the right word, two things can happen:

1) There is a sound/phonological error - the made-up word of the child is not random, the sounds in it almost match the sounds of the original, but not quite. In fact, the 'mistake' is often at the end of the word rather than at the beginning.

2) The meaning/context error - the child comes up with something meaningful, and that meaning is somehow associated with the original meaning. Perhaps the meaning connection is not immediately obvious to the adult, but it is always there, which is what makes these creative words incredibly funny.

Happy Easter egg! (Ms Watkins, 5 years old)



Babies: tiny statisticians

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2XBikHW954>



I hope you enjoyed this taster lesson!

Slides are on the J6 website if you'd like to revisit them, along with recommended summer reading.

Mrs Kerins will see you tomorrow at BGS for Paper 2.

English Language A Level: Summertime priming

Get ready to explore language as it is used in the world today. Below are some ideas for watching, listening and reading more about the topics you'll be covering in the AQA course. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and key takeaways from your independent study.

Paper 1 options

Watch:

- Netflix: *Babies* (Season 1 Ep. 4: First Words)
- TED talks:
 - The linguistic genius of babies (Patricia Kuhl)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2XBkhHW954>
 - The birth of a word (Deb Roy)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RE4ce4mexrU>



Listen:

- BBC Radio 4: *Word of Mouth* (The funny words that kids invent)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtnz/episodes/player>

Reading recommendations:

- *A Little Book of Language* by David Crystal (Chapter 1: Baby Talk) – also an excellent book for Paper 2 topics
- *The Language Instinct* by Steven Pinker (Chapter 9: Baby Born Talking – Describes Heaven).

Paper 2 options

Watch:

- *Fry's Planet Word* documentary series on YouTube (5 episodes):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF55yMtWVi0>

Listen:

- *Lexis* podcast <https://open.spotify.com/show/0EPs83hWYk0XX8cKkjpIbT>
- *Lingthusiasm* podcast
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCy2qzzv5E9SNTpa90CqfkZA>

Reading recommendations:

- **Gender:** *The Myth of Mars and Venus* by Deborah Cameron
- **Accents and attitudes:** *You're All Talk* by Rob Drummond
- **Language diversity and change:** *A Little Book of Language* by David Crystal