

Language Checklist: Semantics

(Listed in order of acquisition when known)

Acquisition of Semantic Knowledge: Preschool Age and Before

Gestures

Initially, communicative intentions are signaled by gestures only. Later, children add vocalizations and then words/signs.

Reaching	Signals a request or demand	Initially, looks at communication partner <i>after</i> reaching			
Pointing	Signals a declaration or a reference to something in the environment	Looks at communication partner <i>after</i> pointing			
Showing	Signals request for attention	Holds up object to show communication partner, but does not release it			
Giving	Frequently follows a maternal request for the object	Includes a release of the object			
Deictic gestures	function in a manner similar to the words <i>this</i> and <i>that</i>	-Pointing at an object, looks at communication partner <i>before</i> pointing -Tapping an object -Performing a swinging motion toward the object -Indicating who is giving what to whom			
Specific referent gestures	<i>Act-on</i> specific referent gestures appear first as action forms on objects	Indicating actions on objects such as <i>give</i> or <i>hit</i>			
	<i>Act-by</i> specific referent gestures are nonaction forms to identify	Child performs action on self such as gestures for <i>laugh</i> and <i>cry</i>			

	attributes				
Functional Gestures (precede vocabulary production)	Child performs actions demonstrating the object's function	Pretending to eat from an empty spoon or drink from an empty cup			

First 50 Words: Categories

General nominals	Doggie	51%			
Specific nominals	Mommy, pets' names	14%			
Action words	up, give, bye-bye	14%			
Modifiers	dirty, mine	9%			
Personal-social words	please, yes	8%			
Function words	for, on	4%			

First 50 Words and Beyond

Relational Words in Children's Single-word Utterances

Existence	Child's attention gained by an entity	May point and say "this," "here," or "what's that?"			
Nonexistence	Child notes that an expected entity is not present	May say "no" or "gone" or name of object with rising intonation/ raised eyebrows			
Disappearance	Child notes that an entity that was present has disappeared	gone, allgone, away, bye-bye			
Recurrence	Child notes that an object appears after an absence or that another	more, again, another			

	object replaces an absent one			
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Action Relational Words

Protoverbs	Nonverbs used in verblike contexts	in, out, off, up, down, no on here, there			
General-Purpose Action Verbs	Do not refer to any specific action	do, put, make			
Deictic Action verbs	Must be interpreted from the perspective of the speaker; used to direct listener's attention	this, that, lookit			
Object-related action-specific words	Refer to specific actions performed on objects	push, drink			
Intransitive action-specific words	Represent specific non-object-related actions	walk, cry, laugh			

Location Relational Words

Describes the directional or spatial relationship of two objects					
Dynamic locative event	Are acquired first and are used more frequently	Knock on door occurs; child says "door."			
Static-spatial	Acquired after	Shoe is on chair; child says			

locative event	dynamic locative event utterances and used less frequently	"chair."			
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State Relational Words

Possession	Recognizes that an object is associated with a particular person	Sees Daddy's shoes and says "Daddy."			
Attribution	Marks the attributes, characteristics, or differences between similar objects; attributes used more to name rather than describe an object	Big, little, tall, short, dirty, hot, funny			

Other Semantic Concepts and Word Categories That Emerge

Dimensional terms	Order of acquisition	hard/soft; big/little; heavy/light; tall/short; long/short; large/small; high/low; thick/thin; wide/narrow; deep/shallow			
Color terms		blue, yellow, red			
Spatial terms		in, on, under, behind			
Kinship terms		mommy, daddy, sister, brother			
Temporal terms		after, before, since, until			

RELATIONAL MEANINGS: SEMANTIC RELATIONS

Semantic Role Definitions

Major noun roles	Agent	Person/object that produces an action			
	Object	Person/object that receives an action or internal feeling			

	Entity	Person/object that exists and is not acted upon			
	Recipient/ Beneficiary	The person/animate object that benefits from an action			
Major verb roles	Action	An external action produced by an agent			
	Process	An internal feeling or experience			
	State	An expression of a state of being			
Modifier/ adverbial	Attribute	A quality or characteristic of an entity			
	Locative	Place where an action occurs or location of an entity			

Semantic Relations in Order of Acquisition

To communicate some of the earlier semantic relations, deaf children may use gestures.

Agent-action	Baby hit
Action-object	Drink milk
Agent object	Baby milk
Action-locative	Sit chair
Entity locative	Daddy home
Possessor-possession	Daddy nose
Entity-attributive	Block yellow or yellow block
Demonstrative- entity	This dog, that hat
Dative (indirect object)	Give Mommy
Experiencer-state	Baby need
Instrumental	Knife cut

Beginning Development of Semantic Networks

Children, during the preschool and early school years, begin to develop semantic networks and interrelationships. Relationships may consist of words for referents found in the same category, such as spoon, bowl, cup, table.

Child demonstrates beginning relationships by using a word in the same category to refer to referent.	Uses the word <i>spoon</i> to refer to a <i>fork</i> Uses the word <i>cup</i> to refer to a <i>glass</i> Uses the word <i>tree</i> to refer to a <i>bush</i>
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SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

In early elementary years, a change occurs in the use of spatial relational terms. There is a decrease in the use of nonspecific and general terms and a corresponding increase in the use of specific spatial terms from ages four to seven. Usage shifts gradually from nonspecific deictic terms, based on the speaker's perspective (here, there), to environmental-based terms (by the window, toward the door) to correct spatial terms (top, up, left).

Elements Required	Example			
NP1...	<i>Dogs have four legs.</i>			
NP1 TO BE ...	The <i>dog</i> is fat and noisy.			
NP1 TO BE NP2 ...	<i>Dogs</i> are things with four legs, a tail, and two ears.			
NP1 TO BE NP2 (superordinate category) ...	<i>Dogs</i> are animals that usually live in people's houses.			

Some Semantic Characteristics of School-age Children (6-12 years)

Rapid growth in number of vocabulary words				
Uses superordinate terms		animals, people, fruit		
Makes cognitive shift from word associations based on syntax to word associations based on semantics	Association based on syntax Association based on semantics	Associates <i>man</i> with <i>work</i> Shifts to associate <i>man</i> with <i>woman</i>		
Begins to learn word meanings from reading context using inferencing and comprehension skills				

Begins to understand and use:	synonyms	same, alike			
	antonyms	hot-cold			
Increases in ability to supply word meaning (definitions)	Definitions involve description and function of object.	The desk is big and brown and you write in it.			
	Definitions contain category and function.	A desk is a piece of furniture that you write on.			
	Preadolescents provide definitions that resemble adult definitions.	A thoroughbred is a type of horse that is an equine/animal. You can ride it or use it to pull wagons or farm equipment.			
Understand and uses multiple meanings of words.		The sky is very <i>blue</i> today.			
		Denara's pet cat ran away last night, and she is very <i>blue</i> today.			

Figurative Language

	Type	Example	Skill Sequence		
The student understands and uses figurative language including:	Analogies	Toe is to foot as finger is to hand.			
	Idioms	It's raining cats and dogs.	-Recognizes correct paraphrasing of figurative language -can paraphrase figurative language him/herself. -can paraphrase and explain his/her paraphrasing		
	Similes	She is as busy as a bee.	-Recognizes		

			correct paraphrasing of figurative language -can paraphrase figurative language him/herself. -can paraphrase and explain his/her paraphrasing		
	Metaphors	She is a gazelle when she competes in a race.	-Recognizes correct paraphrasing of figurative language -can paraphrase figurative language him/herself. -can paraphrase and explain his/her paraphrasing		

During the school years, there appears to be a change in cognitive processing, storage, and retrieval that reflects a shift from a nonlinguistic visual-perceptual mode to linguistic categorization. The initial change occurs in elementary school, with a shift from concrete to abstract during adolescence. The increasing reliance on linguistic categorization allows the child to process greater amounts of linguistic information.

ADOLESCENCE

Characteristics Added to Semantic Knowledge During Adolescence

Characteristics		Examples			
Addition to word meanings (definitions)	Superordinate categories	A snake is a reptile.			
	Relationships to other entities	A snake is bigger than a worm.			
	Internal	Snakes are			

	constituents	vertebrates with a segmented spinal column.			
	Origins	Baby snakes hatch from eggs.			
	Metaphorical uses	He snaked his way along the winding trail.			
Add slang words used by peers		Awesome! Sweet! That's hot!			
Add technical vocabulary from content area courses and other reading		photosynthesis trapezoidal bytes			
Add new words that reflect the cognitive and linguistic activities of education		remember doubt conclude assert interpret predict			
Add connectives used for narratives and in reading and writing		although however nevertheless			
Add adverbs of magnitude		slightly somewhat usually			