

Over the past half-century, scientists have settled on two reasonable possibilities. The first of these is called the 'mental-developmental hypothesis'. It states that one-year-olds speak in baby talk because their immature brains can't handle adult speech. Children don't learn to walk until their bodies are ready. Likewise, they don't speak multi-word sentences or use word endings and function words ('Mummy opened the boxes') before their brains are ready.

The second is called the 'stages-of-language hypothesis', which states that the stages of progress in child speech are necessary stages in language development. A basketball player can't perfect his or her jump shot before learning to (1) jump and (2) shoot. Similarly, children learn to multiply after they have learned to add. This is the order in which children are taught – not the reverse. There's evidence, for instance, that children don't usually begin speaking in two-word sentences until they've learned a certain number of single words. In other words, until they've crossed that linguistic threshold, the word-combination process doesn't get going.

Questions 5–9

Complete the summary using the list of words and phrases, A–H, below.

Two theories about babytalk

According to the writer, there are two main theories related to babytalk. One states that a young child's brain needs 5 to master language, in the same way that it does to master other abilities such as 6

The second theory states that a child's 7 is the key factor. According to this theory, some key steps have to occur in a logical sequence before 8 occurs. Children's 9 develops in the same way.

- A vocabulary level
- B physical movement
- C time
- D attention
- E mathematical knowledge
- F sentence formation
- G learning
- H teaching