Chapter 3 Notes

I. Introduction
   a. Preschool child’s speech reflects sensory, physical, and social experiences, as well as thinking ability
   b. During the preschool years, children move rapidly through successive phases of language learning
   c. Teachers should interact with the children and provide growing opportunities and activities
   d. Background experiences with children and child study give a teacher insight into children’s language behavior
   e. Playing with other children is a major factor influencing language development
      i. Finding friends in the child’s age group is an important part of attending an early childhood center
      ii. Language abilities blossom in a place where there are fascinating things to explore and talk about
   f. Almost impossible to find a child who has all of the speech characteristics of a given age group, but most children possess some of the characteristics that are typical for their age level
      i. Wide range within normal age-level behavior
      ii. Each child’s individuality is an important consideration
   g. Preschool period is divided into two age groups:
      i. Early preschoolers (two- and three-year-olds)
      ii. Older preschoolers (four- and five-year-olds)

II. Young Preschoolers
   a. Communicate needs, desires, and feelings through speech and action
      i. Close observation of a child’s nonverbal communication can help uncover true meanings
   b. Continued fast growth and changing language abilities are to be expected
      i. Children may acquire 6 to 10 new words a day
   c. Squeals, grunts, and screams are often part of play
      i. Imitating animals, sirens, and environmental noise is common
      ii. Child points and pulls to help others understand meanings
      iii. Younger preschoolers tend to act as though others can read their thoughts because, in the past, adults anticipated what was needed
      iv. A few children may have what seems to be a limited vocabulary at school until they feel at home there
   d. A difference between the child’s receptive (or comprehension) vocabulary and his expressive (or productive) vocabulary is apparent, with the productive vocabulary lagging behind the receptive vocabulary
      i. Receptive vocabulary requires that a child hear a word and anticipate or react appropriately
1. Production of a word means the child speaks the word at an appropriate time and place
   ii. Children begin to acquire more complex forms of grammar during this time period, including:
       1. Past tenses
       2. Embedded clauses
       3. Passive constructions
   iii. Creative mistakes happen such as, “he breakeded my bike,” which indicate that the child is noticing consistent patterns and applying them to the language system as he understands it
   iv. Words most often used are nouns and short possessives
   v. Speech focuses on present events
   e. As preschoolers progress in the ability to hold brief conversations, they must keep conversational topics in mind and connect their thoughts with those of others
      i. Difficult for two-year-olds
      ii. True conversational exchanges are brief if they exist at all
      iii. Preschoolers are adept at turn-taking, although their speech is filled with pauses and repetitions in attempts to correct themselves
   f. Speech may be loud and high pitched when the child is excited
      i. May be barely audible and muffled when the child is embarrassed, sad, or shy
      ii. Speech of two- and three-year-olds tends to be uneven in rhythm, with comments issued in spurts rather than in an even flow like the speech of older children
   g. Seems to be an important step forward in the complexity of content in children’s speech at age two
      i. They may begin making comments about cause and effect and sometimes use conjunctions, such as 'cause, 'ah, and 'um, between statements
   h. Young preschoolers’ talk is self-focused
      i. Much of the time, very young preschoolers’ play focuses on recreating the work of home and family
      ii. Play of slightly older preschoolers is more interactive
          1. Child continues self-play but also explores other children, adults, environments, and actions
          2. Eventually, most preschoolers understand that it is usually worth their while to share toys and take turns because when other playmates are around it is more fun
          3. When children begin exploring these other play options, “what’s happening” in play becomes a speech subject, along with brief verbal reactions to what others are saying and doing
      j. Desire to organize and make sense of their experiences is often apparent
i. Colors, counting, and new categories of thought emerge in their speech

ii. Children tend to live out the action words they speak or hear in the speech of others

k. The subdued two-year-old

i. In any given group of young children, a few may appear subdued and quiet, having a tendency toward what many might call shyness

ii. These children may possess a natural inclination that tends to inhibit spontaneous speech
   1. Strong emotions can cause muscle tension, including tension in the larynx
      a. Can also affect speech volume

iii. Most preschool teachers have worked with children whose speech was difficult to hear
   1. These children often seem restrained when faced with unfamiliar situations
   2. Older preschoolers may become more outgoing and talkative or may continue to be less talkative and somewhat subdued when compared with their more boisterous counterparts
   3. Teachers respect these children’s natural inclinations and tendencies

I. Verb forms

i. In English, most regular-form verbs use -ed to indicate past tense
   1. Many frequently used verbs have irregular past-tense forms, such as came, fell, hit, saw, took, and gave

ii. Because the child begins using often-heard words, early speech contains correct verb forms
   1. With additional exposure to language, children realize that past events are described with -ed verb endings
      a. At that point, children tack the -ed on regular verbs as well as on irregular verbs, creating words such as broked, dranked, and other charming past-tense forms
   2. Verbs ending with “ing” are used more than before
   3. Even auxiliary verbs are scattered through speech
      a. “Me have”
      b. “Daddy did it”

   4. Words such as wanna, gonna, and hafta seem to be learned as one word, and stick in children’s vocabulary, being used over and over

iii. Regularization
1. Term for children’s speech behavior that indicates they have formed a new internal rule about language and are using it

2. As children filter what they hear, creating their own rule systems, they begin to apply the new rules

3. Expected sequence in formed rules for past-tense verb usage:
   a. Uses irregular tense endings correctly (e.g., ran, came, drank)
   b. Forms an internal rule when discovering that -ed expresses past events (e.g., danced, called, played)
   c. Over-regularizes;
      i. For example, adds -ed to all regular and irregular verbs that were formerly spoken correctly (e.g., camed, dided, wented, breaked)
   d. Learns that both regular and irregular verbs express past tense, and uses both

4. In using plural noun forms, the following sequence is common.
   a. Remembers and uses singular forms of nouns correctly (e.g., ball, dog, mouse, bird)
   b. Uses irregular noun plurals correctly (e.g., men, feet, mice)
   c. Forms an internal rule that plurals have “s” or “z” ending sounds
   d. Applies rule to all nouns (e.g., balls, mens, dogs, feets, birds, mices, or ballsez, dogsez, feetsez)
   e. Achieves flexible internal rules for plurals, memorizes irregular plural forms, and uses plurals correctly

m. Key-word sentences
   i. The two-year-old omits many words in sentences, as does the toddler
      1. Remaining words are shortened versions of adult sentences in which only the essentials are present
      2. These words are key words and convey the essence of the message
         a. Without relating utterances to real occurrences, meaning might be lost to the listener
   ii. Sentences at this stage are about four words long
      1. Some pronouns and adjectives, such as pretty or big, are used
      2. Very few, if any, prepositions (by, on, with) or articles (a, an, the) are spoken
3. Some words are run together and are spoken as single units, such as “whadat?” or “eatem”
4. Order of words (syntax) may seem jumbled at times, as in “outside going ball,” but basic grammar rules are observed in most cases
   iii. Pronouns are often used incorrectly and are confused, as in “Me all finish milk,” and “him Mark’s”
   1. Concepts of male and female, living things, and objects may be only partly understood

n. Questions
   i. Wh- questions (where, what, why, who) begin to appear in speech
      1. During the toddler period, rising voice inflection and simple declarative utterances such as “Dolly drink?” are typical
   ii. At this stage, questions focus on location, objects, and people, with causation (why), process (how), and time (when)
      1. Reflects more mature thinking that probes purposes and intentions in others
      2. Questions are frequent, and the child sometimes asks for an object’s function or the causes of certain events
         a. It is as if the child sees that things exist for a purpose that in some way relates to him
         b. The answers adults provide stimulate the child’s desire to know more
   iii. Vocabularies range from 250 to more than 1,000 words
      1. Average of 50 new words enters the child’s vocabulary each month
      2. Gartrell notes children are like sponges
         a. They absorb information from the world around them and incorporate it into their growing beings

III. Categories in Children’s Thinking
   a. Children organize a tremendous amount of sensory and experiential happenings by forming mental categories
      i. Studies point out that young children can be quite sophisticated in how they group objects and think about their groupings
      ii. Young preschoolers’ categories differ from those of older children.
         1. Tend to focus on superficial properties such as the “look” of something and where it is found
      iii. Preschoolers often put items together in a scene rather than grouping items that are alike in more fundamental ways
   b. Overlapping concepts
      i. Overextension
         1. Younger preschoolers commonly call all four-footed furry animals “dog,” and all large animals “horse”
a. Child has overextended and made a logical conclusion because these animals have many of the same features, can be about the same size, and therefore fit the existing word

ii. Concept development (recognition of one or more distinguishing features or characteristics) proceeds by leaps and bounds during preschool years
   1. Is essential to meaningful communication
   2. Details, exceptions, and discrepancies are often discussed in four-year-olds’ conversations
   3. The younger preschooler can be described as a “looker and doer” who engages in limited discussion of the features of situations
   4. Excitement of exploration and discovery, particularly of something new and novel, is readily apparent in preschool classrooms
      a. Children typically crowd around to see, touch, experience, and make comments about objects and events
      b. Teachers notice the all-consuming focusing and the long periods of watching or touching, usually followed by verbalizing and questioning an event or experience

c. Running commentaries
   i. As children play, their actions are sometimes accompanied by a running self-commentary or “stream of consciousness” talking concerning what they are doing or what is happening
      1. Can be described as a kind of verbal thought process, like mentally talking to oneself
      2. Seems to increase in complex play situations as the child problem solves and talks it through
   ii. Researchers offer multiple reasons for private speech
      1. Talking to themselves gives them directions for their actions
      2. They need a sensorimotor activity as a reinforcement or “crutch” because their cognitive schemes are not yet well-developed
      3. More efficient for them to talk their ideas through in words rather than silently
   iii. Self-talk may help children:
      1. Sequence actions
      2. Control their own behavior
      3. Use more flexible modes of thinking
      4. Manipulate the goals they are trying to achieve in their play
   iv. Talking to self and talking to another can occur alternately
1. Toys, animals, and treasured items still receive a few words  
2. Statements directed to others do not usually need answers  
3. Private speech rarely considers another’s point of view  

v. Researchers who have examined self-talk suggest a number of possible developmental benefits, including:  
   1. Practicing newly recognized language forms  
   2. Obtaining pleasure through play with word sounds  
   3. Exploring vocal capacities  
   4. Reliving particular significant events  
   5. Creating dialogue in which the child voices all people’s parts, perhaps helping the child later fit into social settings  
   6. Experimenting with fantasy, thereby accommodating the creative urge  
   7. Attending objectively to language  
   8. Facilitating motor behavior in a task or project  

vi. Self-talk is natural, common behavior  
   1. By the age of five, the child’s self-talk is observed infrequently  
   2. As children approach the age of three, both dialogue and monologue are apparent  
      a. Observers of play conversations find it difficult to determine just how much of each is present  

vii. Teachers who conduct group times with younger preschoolers and have children who ramble often develop strategies to encourage “my turn, your turn” behaviors  
   1. Kitchen timer, a ping-pong paddle held by each speaker, or a turned on flashlight to signal a child that his speaking turn is over are strategies some teachers have devised  
   2. Teachers also try to draw focus back to the subject at hand by saying, “Amy, yes, dogs do use their tongues when they drink. It is Jeremy’s turn to tell us about his dog now.”  

d. Repetition  
   i. Repetition in speech is common  
      1. Happens sometimes randomly at play, and at other times it is done with a special purpose  
      2. Young child may repeat almost everything said to him  
      3. Most young preschoolers repeat words or parts of sentences regularly  
      4. Children’s growing language skills allow them to create repetitions that rhyme, as in “oogie, woogie, poogie bear,” which greatly please them
a. They quickly imitate words that they like; sometimes, excitement is the cause
5. Rhyming words or rhyming syllables may promote enjoyable mimicking and younger preschoolers are particularly fascinated and attracted to words that rhyme

ii. Repetition:
   1. Helps children remember things (just as adults mentally repeat new telephone numbers)
   2. Reduces stress
   3. Is an enjoyable form of sound making

iii. Free associations (voiced juggling of sounds and words) occur at play and at rest and may sound like babbling
   1. Many times, it seems as though, having learned a word, the child must savor it or practice it, over and over

e. Lack of clarity

i. About one in every four words of the young preschooler is not readily understandable
   1. Lack of clarity is partially caused by an inability to control the mouth, tongue, and breathing and to hear subtle differences and distinctions in speech
   2. Typically, articulation of all English speech sounds, especially some consonant blends, is not accomplished until age seven or eight
   3. Young preschoolers are only 40 to 80 percent correct in articulation
      a. This lack of intelligibility in children can be partly attributed to the complexity of the task of mastering the sounds
      b. Although children may be right on target in development, their speech may still be difficult to understand at times

ii. Young preschooler may have difficulty with the rate of speech, phrasing, inflection, intensity, syntax, and voice stress
   1. Faulty articulation and defective sound making can also contribute to the problem
   2. Child who attempts to form the longest utterances is the one who is hardest to understand
   3. Child who omits sounds is less clear than the one who distorts them
   4. As a rule, expect omissions, substitutions, and distortions in the speech of two- and three-year olds, for they will be plentiful

iii. Children’s pronunciation patterns are not fully like adults by three years of age, but the basic features of the adult phonological system are present
1. Most children can produce all of the vowel and nearly all of the consonant sounds in at least a few words, but their productions are not 100 percent accurate

iv. Young children typically omit sounds at the ends of words, saying, for example, “ba” for ball
1. Middle consonants in longer words are also passed over lightly—“ikeem” for ice cream or “telfone” for telephone
2. Even beginning sounds may be omitted, as in “ellow” for yellow

v. Substitutions of letter sounds are also common, for example, “aminal,” and “pasghetti”
1. Until the new sound is mastered, one consonant may even take the place of another; “wabbit,” “wun,” and “wain” are common examples
2. Children who cannot yet produce all of the speech sounds accurately can generally hear the differences between w and r, or t and th when they are pronounced by others

f. Dramatic play
i. Short play sequences that involve acting or imitating the behavior of family begin at home and school
1. Speech usually accompanies the reenactments
2. Although young children at this age play side-by-side, most of this type of play starts as solitary activity
3. Common play themes include:
   a. Talking on the phone
   b. Mom caring for a baby
   c. Mom or dad cooking
4. Dolls, toys, and dress-up clothes are usually part of the action and may serve to initiate this type of play
5. Observers of two- and three-year-olds in classrooms find it hard to determine whether children are engaged in joint planning of play or are simply playing in the same area with the same kinds of playthings
6. Preschools purposely purchase multiple dolls so that many children can feed and rock “their babies” when they see others doing it

IV. Advice for Families and Early Childhood Educators
a. Parents sometimes worry about a child who stops, stammers, or stutters when speaking
   i. Calling attention to this speech and making demands on the child cause tension, making the situation worse
   ii. All children hesitate, repeat, stop, and start in speaking—it is typical behavior
      1. Searching for the right word takes time, and thoughts may come faster than words
iii. Adults need to relax and wait
   1. Speech is a complex process of sending and receiving
   2. Maintaining patience and optimism and assuming a casual “I’m listening” stance is the best course of action for the adult
   3. Many schools routinely send home informational material to alert parents to age-level speech characteristics
b. Teachers frequently encounter child statements that are seemingly illogical, and they suspect, if they acknowledge them, the child will soon provide more information
   i. Child logic is there, but teachers know they are not privy to inner thought processes or children’s past experiences
   ii. With more information, what at first appeared illogical turns out to have beautiful logic
c. Frequently, the listening teachers will sometimes feel on the edge of understanding what the child is trying to say
   i. This happens with both younger and older preschoolers struggling at times to put into words what they are thinking
   ii. Acceptance and interest are appropriate
d. Attentive interaction with positive feedback is recommended for adults who live or work with two- and three-year-olds
   i. Reacting to the intent of the child’s message is more helpful than concentrating on correctness
      1. Focus on what is said rather than the way it is said
   ii. A lot of guessing is still necessary to determine what the child is trying to say
      1. Adult’s model of speech will override temporary errors as the child hears more and more of it
e. By simply naming objects, adults can encourage children to notice how different items are similar and can help children gain new information about the world
   i. Helping children see details and relationships in what they encounter is useful if done in a matter of fact rather than an unpressured way or an “I’m trying to teach you something” manner
   ii. Connecting past events to present events may aid their understanding
f. Children’s hearing should be checked regularly because even a moderate hearing loss may affect speech production
   i. Preschoolers are particularly prone to upper respiratory infections and ear problems

V. Books for Younger Preschoolers
a. Experts generally suggest books that have:
   i. Themes, objects, animals, or people that are familiar and within their range of life experience
   ii. Clarity of content and story line
iii. Clear, simple illustrations or photographs with backgrounds that do not distract from the intended focus
iv. Themes concerning everyday tasks and basic human needs
b. Most two- and three-year-olds enjoy actively participating in story reading, but they can be very good listeners as well
i. Participation can include:
   1. Pointing
   2. Making noise
   3. Repeating dialogue
   4. Performing imitative body actions
c. Books that are repetitive and predictable offer the enjoyment of anticipating what will come next
i. For children who are used to being read to at bedtime, the calming effect of listening to the human voice becomes very apparent during story reading, when heads nod or children act sleepy

VI. Older Preschoolers
a. As younger preschoolers get older, adults can expect:
   i. Longer sentences with more words per sentence
   ii. More specificity
   iii. More “ing” endings on verbs
   iv. Increased correctness in the forms of the verb “to be”
   v. Use of more auxiliary verbs
   vi. More facility with passive-voice verbs, including “did” and “been”
   vii. Changes in negative sentences, from “no want” to “I don’t want”
   viii. Changes in question forms, from “car go?” to “where did the car go?”
   ix. Changes in mental categories
   x. Additional clarifications in articulation of speech sounds
b. Between four and five years of age, most preschoolers approach speech similar to adult use
   i. Their sentences are longer, with almost all words present rather than only key words
c. Preschoolers’ play is active and vocal, and they copy each other’s words and manner of speaking
   i. Word such as “monster,” or more colorful words, may swiftly become of interest and spread rapidly from child to child
   ii. Every generation of preschoolers seems to have its own favorite sayings, and new ones are constantly appearing
d. Social speech and conversations of the older preschooler are heard and interpreted to a greater degree by others of the child’s age
   i. Child learns and practices the complexities of social conversation, including:
      1. Gaining another’s attention by making eye contact, touching, or using words or catch-phrases like “Know what?”
2. Pausing and listening
3. Correcting himself
4. Maintaining attention by not pausing so as not to let another speaker jump in
5. Taking turns in conversing by developing patience and trying to listen while still holding in mind what he wants to say

e. Friendships
   i. At ages two and three, friendships are usually temporary, changing from day to day
   ii. Friendships of older preschoolers are more stable and lasting
       1. By ages four and five, there seems to be a desire to remain compatible and work out differences, therefore creatively maintaining a type of play acceptable to both
   iii. Negotiation, clarification, and open-mindedness flourish during play
       1. A friend’s needs and requests are handled with sensitivity, and flexibility characterizes conversations
       2. Spats, “blowups,” and the crushed feelings accompanying rejection sometimes occur
       3. Verbal interaction between children adds a tremendous amount of verbal input and also promotes output

f. Group play
   i. Joint planning of play activities and active make-believe and role-playing take on new depth
       1. Adults often see themselves in the play of children
       2. Four-year-old’s main concern seems to be interacting with age mates
       3. Twosomes and groups of play companions are typical in older preschoolers’ classrooms and play yards
       4. As speech blossoms, friendships blossom and disintegrate
       5. Speech is used to discourage and disallow entrance to play groups when running from newcomers is impossible
       6. Speech is found to be effective in hurting feelings, as in statements such as “I don't like you” or “No girls"
       7. Children find that verbal inventiveness may help them join play or initiate play
   ii. In group play, pretending is paramount
       1. Make-believe play appears to be at its zenith
       2. Many children grow in the ability to:
           a. Verbally suggest new directions and avenues of fantasy
           b. Engage in verbal negotiation
           c. Compromise
           d. Argue
e. Become a group’s leader by using the right words

3. Popular children seem to be those who use speech creatively and become enjoyable companions to others

iii. Violent statements such as “I’m going to shoot you” or “cut you up” are sometimes heard, and these tend to reflect television viewing or media/video drama

1. Reality-fantasy of some play situations may become temporarily blurred, causing some children considerable anxiety

iv. Older preschoolers talk “in character” as they elaborate their dramatic play

1. If a scenario calls for a mother talking to a baby or teenagers talking, preschoolers adopt appropriate speech

2. Imitations of pop singers or cartoon characters are common

3. Role-taking is an important skill in mature communication, indicating that social/dramatic play and improvisation are effective means of facilitating growth in communicative competence

v. Four-year-olds seem to boast, brag, and make lots of noise

1. Apparently boastful statements such as “Look what I did” may just be the child’s attempt to show that he is capable and to share his accomplishments

2. Although preschoolers enjoy being with their peers, they quickly and easily engage in quarreling and name-calling

   a. Sometimes, they do battle verbally

   b. Typically, three- to five-year-olds disagree over possession of objects or territory, and verbal reasons or verbal evidence may help them win arguments

   c. Many conflicts are resolved and lead to continued play

   d. Speech helps children settle their affairs with and without adult help

vi. As a child develops a sense of humor, giggling becomes part of the noise of play

1. Silliness often reigns

2. Preschoolers may distort and repeat what a care-giver says, making changes in sounds and gleefully chanting the distorted message

   a. Teachers who want to cultivate children’s ability to understand and appreciate humor try to present materials that challenge children’s ability to interpret humor
vii. Arguing, persuading, and children using statements aimed at controlling others are frequently heard during play
  1. Older preschool children are able to:
     a. State reasons
     b. Request information
     c. Give explanations
     d. Utter justifications for their behavior
     e. Verbally defend themselves
  2. At times, establishing authority in disagreements seems paramount to compromising

g. Inner speech
  i. Much of child speech during early preschool years concerns child comments about what the child is doing as he is doing it or what the child has done
     1. Subtle shift takes place during the later preschool years, when inner speech becomes apparent and the child more frequently plans, monitors ideas, and evaluates silently
     2. Child is still talking about his accomplishments and actions in a look-at-me fashion, but a greater portion of his self-commentary is unspoken

h. Exploring the conventions of conversation
  i. Children learn language by reinventing it for themselves, not by direct instruction
     1. They crack the code through exposure and opportunities to converse
     2. They actively, although unconsciously, ingest and discover the rules of the system
     3. Speech errors often alert adults to the inner rules of language being formed
  ii. Conversations have unwritten rules and expectations, “You-talk-I-talk” sequence being the most apparent
     1. Some preschoolers (three and four-year-olds) may delight in violating or “playing” with the conventions of conversation
     2. Sometimes preschoolers deliberately mislead (usually to tease playfully) or use “taboo” bathroom talk, nonsense talk, or tone unexpectedly when capable of verbally responding at a more mature level
        a. Most teachers sense the child may be asserting independence by rejecting conversational convention
        b. One teacher termed this “going into the verbal crazies” to reject what another child or adult is saying, therefore attempting to change or control the situation
c. By violating conversational convention, children may clarify how conversational interaction should take place

i. Relational words
   i. More and more relational words appear as the child begins to compare, contrast, and revise stored concepts with new happenings
   ii. Perhaps because adults stress bad and good or because a young child’s inner sense of what is and what is not correct in developing, teachers notice that preschoolers often describe feelings and people within narrow limits
      1. One is pretty or ugly, mean or nice
      2. Shades of meaning or extenuating circumstances seem yet to be understood
   iii. Three-year-old children are usually able to describe the world around them, and four-year-old children are also creatures of their senses
      1. They are concerned with the smell of a thing, the touch of a thing, the look of a thing, and the sound of a thing
      2. Sometime during their fourth year, children’s well-developed sensory awareness begins to take on conceptual dimensions
      3. They begin to notice function or use and they begin to see it comparatively
         a. Come to see relationships between several objects and/or several events, and in comparing one to the other, they are learning the principle of categorization
      4. Although the words “big” and “little” are commonly used by preschoolers, they are overused
      5. Many other comparison words give children trouble, and one hears “biggerer,” “big-big-big,” and “bestus one” to describe size
      6. Time words elicit smiles from adults as children wrestle with present, past, and future, as in “zillion days” or “tomorrower”
      7. Number words are difficult for some children to handle, and expressions such as “whole bunches” and “eleventeen” are sometimes heard

j. Speech and child behavior
   i. Tremendous variety in the ways children can modify their voices, and they may speak in a different pitch or rhythm when speaking to different people
      1. Can whine, whisper, change volume, and distort timing and pronunciation
ii. Some children discover that by increasing volume or changing tone they can affect others' behavior
   1. Find that speech can show anger or sarcasm and can be used aggressively to hurt others
iii. Preschoolers may mimic the speech of “bad guy” media characters
   1. Acts of aggression, clothed in the imitated speech and actions of a TV character, can become part of this type of play
iv. Purposeful echoing or baby talk can irritate or tease
   1. Excessive talking is sometimes used to get one’s way, and “talking back” may occur
v. Some children find that silence can get as much attention from adults as loud speech
   1. Tattling on another may simply be a way of checking for correctness, or it can be purposeful
vi. Through trial and error and feedback, the child finds that words can hurt, gain friends or favor, or satisfy a wide range of needs
   1. Because preschoolers are emotion-packed human beings, their statements range from expressions of “you’re my buddy” to “you’re my enemy” within a matter of minutes
vii. What may appear to be violent statements may be just role-playing or make-believe competition
   1. To some adults, the preschooler speech may appear loud and wild
   2. Speech seems overly nasal and full of moisture that sprays out in some words
   3. Young child may have frequent nasal colds and congestion during this period
   4. Preschoolers tend to stand close to others, and their volume increases when they are intense about their subjects
k. Impact words
   i. Not all speech used by older preschoolers is appreciated by adults
      1. Name-calling and offensive words and phrases may be used by active preschoolers to gain attention and reaction from both adults and children
      2. Children discover that some phrases, sentences, and words cause unusual behavior in others
         a. Actively explore these and usually learn which of these are inappropriate and when they can be used
         b. Gartrell notes children often hear others use expletives spoken when emotions run high
c. Children learn that most of this type of talk has “impact value”
d. If certain talk makes people laugh or gives the children some kind of positive reward, it is used over and over

ii. Bathroom words seem to be explored and used as put-downs and attention getters

1. As every parent and teacher knows, young children experiment with language related to the body, and particularly to the private parts, going to the bathroom, and sexuality
2. Children’s use of sexual words can make it seem as if they know more than they do
   a. Giggles and uproarious laughter can ensue when these words are used, adding to the child’s enjoyment, and new teachers may not know how to handle these situations
   b. School’s policy regarding this matter can be a subject for staff discussion
3. Generally, newly spoken bathroom talk should be ignored unless it is hurtful, or the child should be told that the place to use the word is in the bathroom
   a. Often remedies the behavior because the child’s enjoyment of it is spoiled without an audience
   b. Alternatively, it might suffice to firmly say, “That’s a word that hurts. His name is Michael,” or in a calm but firm voice, “That kind of talk is unacceptable.”
4. Preschoolers love using forbidden words, especially when they play together
   a. What parents and teachers can control is what is said in their presence

I. Sound words

i. In our culture, children are particularly fond of repeating conventionalized sounds reputedly made by animals (“arf-arf,” “meow,” “baa”) as well as action sounds for toy vehicles (“putt-putt,” “beep,” “varoom”)
   1. When a child is playing the baby in home reenactment dramatic play, “wa-wa” will be heard frequently
   2. Rough- and-tumble outside play may be accompanied by cartoon strip sounds like “pow,” “bam,” and “zap”
   3. Good number of four-year olds can distinguish rhyming words, and enjoys using them or making them up

m. Created words

i. Created words such as “turner-overer” for pancake turner, “mudpudders” for rain boots, or “dirt digger” for spade are wonderfully descriptive and crop up occasionally in child speech
1. Perhaps a means of filling in gaps in their vocabularies
   ii. Many cite young children’s fascination with the functions of
objects in their environment as the reason such words are created
      1. Children love making up words, including nonsense
words and rhymes, and revel in their newly gained
abilities to do so
n. Word meanings
   i. During later preschool years, children often become focused on
what words mean and think and wonder about them
      1. They begin to understand that words are arbitrary
symbols with no intrinsic connection to their meaning but
rather are representatives of meaning
o. Reality and nonsense
   i. Some preschool children can enjoy the absurd, nonsensical,
and ridiculous in their experiences and find humor in the
unexpected
      1. Others, at a different stage in their cognitive development
with another orientation, insist on knowing the right
way—the real, the accepted, the “whys and
wherefores”—and will see no humor in what confuses
them or contradicts the “usual order of things”
   ii. A number of preschoolers view life and surroundings seriously,
literally
      1. Others can “play” in speech with the opposite of what
they know to be true
   iii. Teachers are careful not to be aware of the tendency to
suppress a child’s delight in absurdity by insisting upon exact or
literal renditions of things
      1. Urges teachers to encourage nonsense play by
appreciating a child’s inventions or nonsensical
propositions
      2. They may model some silliness or nonsense themselves
p. Myths concerning speech and intelligence
   i. Large and mature vocabulary at this age may tend to lead
teachers to think a child has superior intelligence
      1. Making conclusions about children based on language
ability at this age has inherent pitfalls considering the
many factors that could produce limited or advanced
vocabulary, particularly when one considers cultural
differences, bilingualism, and the child’s access to
“language-rich environments”
      2. At later ages language usage does seem to be related to
school success
q. Common speech patterns of older preschoolers
i. Four-year-olds often rhyme words in their play speech, and teachers sometimes join the fun

ii. Older preschoolers:
   1. Engage in self-chatter
   2. Continue to make errors in grammar and in the use of:
      a. Past tense of verbs
      b. Adjectives
      c. Time words
      d. Negatives

iii. Preschoolers’ skills are increasing at this stage, and their use of forms of the irregular verb “to be” improves

iv. Sentence structure becomes closer to how adults structure sentences, including:
   1. Use of relative clauses
   2. Complex and compound sentence forms

v. Articulation of letter sounds is still developing
   1. About 75 percent of English letter sounds are made correctly

vi. Omissions of letter sounds (‘merca for America) and substitutions (udder for other) are still present

vii. Older preschooler may have a vocabulary of more than 1,500 words
   1. Not only do they learn new words and new concepts, they also enrich and solidify their knowledge of known words by establishing multiple links among words and concepts

viii. Child is very concerned about the correct names of things and can find the errors in the speech of others

ix. Because the older preschooler is an active explorer, his questions still probe the “purposefulness” of objects or actions

x. Four-year-old becomes an active problem solver and tends to explain things through visually noted attributes

xi. Preschoolers may not be able to talk about their solutions to problems
   1. Although they can respond to and solve questions posed verbally, they may not be able to explain their thinking

xii. The child can transform questions

xiii. Most four-year-old children enjoy books, stories, and activities with words
   1. More time is spent on these pursuits

xiv. The four-year-old may still stutter and clutter and stop speech when there is stress or excitement
   1. Less-mature speech of a best friend might be copied, and nonverbal expression is most often a part of communication
Most four- and five-year-olds are avid speakers interested in exploring the real world and make-believe world.

Wide range of individual speech behavior is both normal and possible

1. Knowing some typical behaviors can help the teacher understand young children
2. Some younger preschoolers may have the speech characteristics of older preschoolers, whereas some older preschoolers have the characteristics of younger preschoolers
   a. Each child is unique in his progress and rate of acquiring language skills

Metalinguistic awareness and brain growth

i. Teachers and parents hope that preschool language arts experiences will help and aid children’s learning to read and write with ease
   1. Preschoolers may begin to notice words as objects
      a. Metalinguistic awareness
         i. Knowledge of the nature of language as an object
   2. Children begin to notice words as objects and later become able to manipulate them to learn to read and write and to accomplish a host of other nonliteral ends, such as using metaphors, creating puns, and using irony
      a. Before children can engage in flexible uses of words, they must have an implicit understanding that words are separate from their referents
         i. Young children often consider the name of an object another of its intrinsic attributes
         ii. Later, children learn that words themselves are not inherent attributes of objects, which allows them to move beyond literal word use and adopt a metaphoric stance
   ii. A critical restructuring of the brain begins about age four when a surge in learning is happening
      1. The brain is beginning to eliminate weak connections but is still eagerly seeking information from the senses
      2. Early childhood educators and many researchers are urging that a national emphasis and priority be given to early childhood education especially in the key areas of language learning, mathematics, music education, and problem solving skill development