



HOW BABIES LEARN TO TALK

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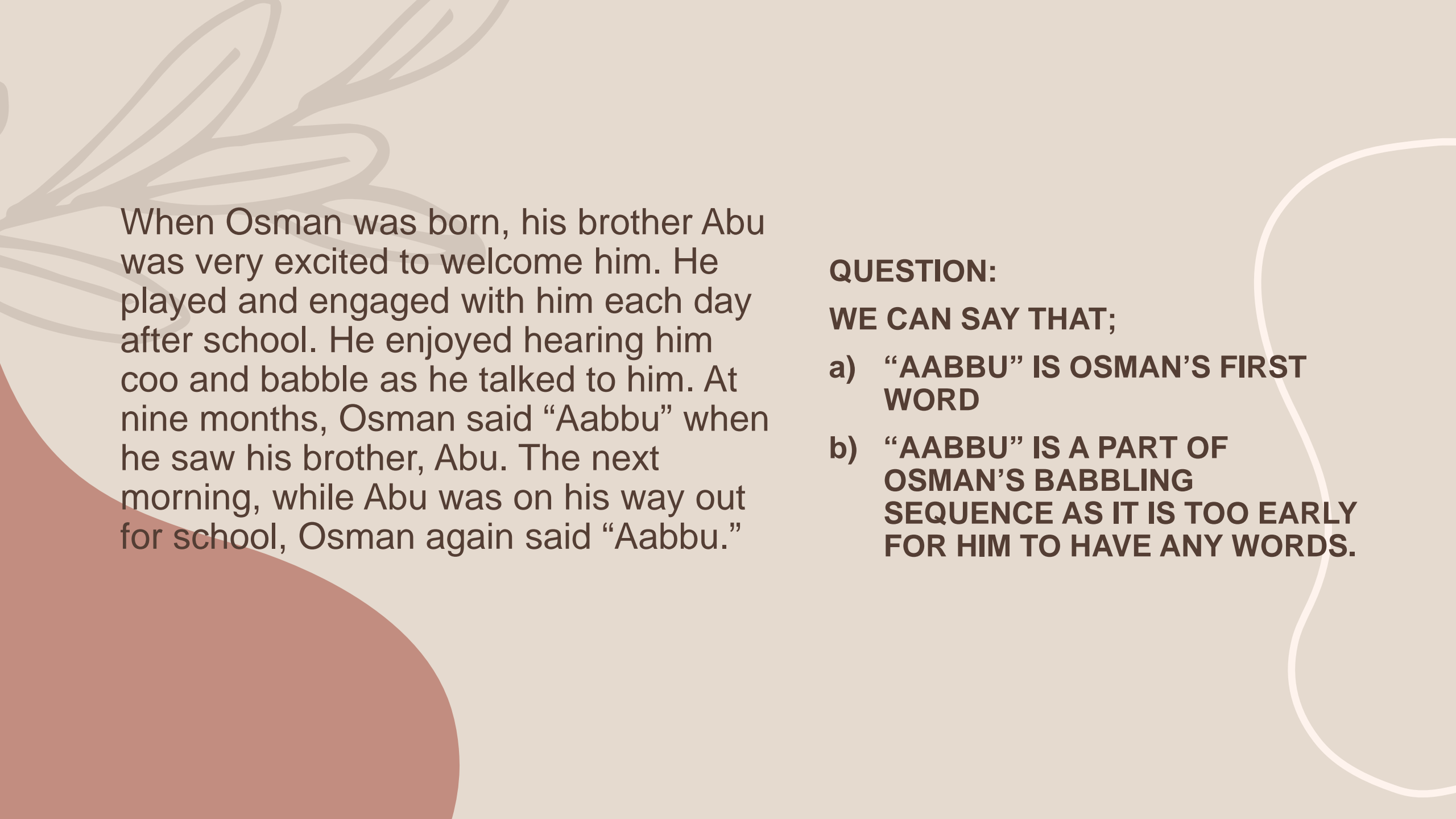
LET'S ANALYZE THIS?

As a baby, Aba liked to smile a lot. She made random “sounds” whenever she saw her mom and siblings. When Aba was 13 months old, Aba said “ba” “ma” ma”... for the first time while playing with her rattle. Aba’s mom was in the kitchen across the living room. She said in excitement; “ Finally, Aba is talking. She just called me mama”.

Which of these events happened first in Aba’s life:

- A) Talking as described by mom
- B) Babbling
- C) Communicating





When Osman was born, his brother Abu was very excited to welcome him. He played and engaged with him each day after school. He enjoyed hearing him coo and babble as he talked to him. At nine months, Osman said “Aabbu” when he saw his brother, Abu. The next morning, while Abu was on his way out for school, Osman again said “Aabbu.”

QUESTION:

WE CAN SAY THAT;

- a) **“AABBU” IS OSMAN’S FIRST WORD**
- b) **“AABBU” IS A PART OF OSMAN’S BABBLING SEQUENCE AS IT IS TOO EARLY FOR HIM TO HAVE ANY WORDS.**

NOW LET'S UNPACK: COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE & SPEECH



- **Speech (a.k.a talking)** basically is how we say sounds and words. It is a verbal process. Involves oral structures designed for making sounds.
- **Language** refers to a system of conventional, spoken, signed, or written words that we use to share ideas, thoughts, and emotions. Involves understanding and production
- **Communication** is the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts etc

IMPORTANCE OF EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- Cognitive development- thinking and problem-solving
- Literacy: Reading and writing
- Social skills
- Emotional wellbeing
- Academic success
- Relationships and friendships
- Participation in community
- Occupation and apprenticeship

FACTORS INFLUENCING EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- Biological/ genetic factors- Typically can not be controlled by the parents. Results in developmental delays/ disorders, chromosomal disorders/ syndromes etc.
- Environmental factors: Can be influenced by individuals, objects etc. present in the child's environment.
- A combination of both genetics and the environment

THE ENVIRONMENT POSITIVELY SHAPES LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT WHEN WE;

1. Provide adequate and effective parent-child interaction
2. Create a language rich environment
3. Expose children to language-stimulating activities; key for cognitive growth
4. Engage actively instead of passively with gadgets/screens
5. Prioritize activities that enhance socio-emotional development through play, story telling and reading
6. Create safe and healthy environments devoid of hazards and abuse
7. Employ techniques like helpful feedbacking, modeling, recoding, scaffolding etc. to support language development
8. Seek advice/help from qualified professionals about myths/superstitions.

HOW CHILDREN LEARN NEW WORDS

- Learning words in isolation
- Cross-situational word learning- learning despite uncertainties of words
- Statistical tracking of word segments
- Bootstrapping- for verb learning



THE PROCESS OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

PRE-LANGUAGE STAGE

- Crying serves as the first communication signal
- The first cry of a baby is as important as their first step
- Reflexive vocalizations follow- non-speech sounds
- Speech differentiation- tracking speech sounds including contrastive sounds
- Cooing- The child first “speech rehearsal” using vowel sounds. Usually around 3 months of age
- Babbling- Between 4-6 months, the child begins to make sounds like “ma”, “da”, “ba” etc. Babbling mimics speech as it



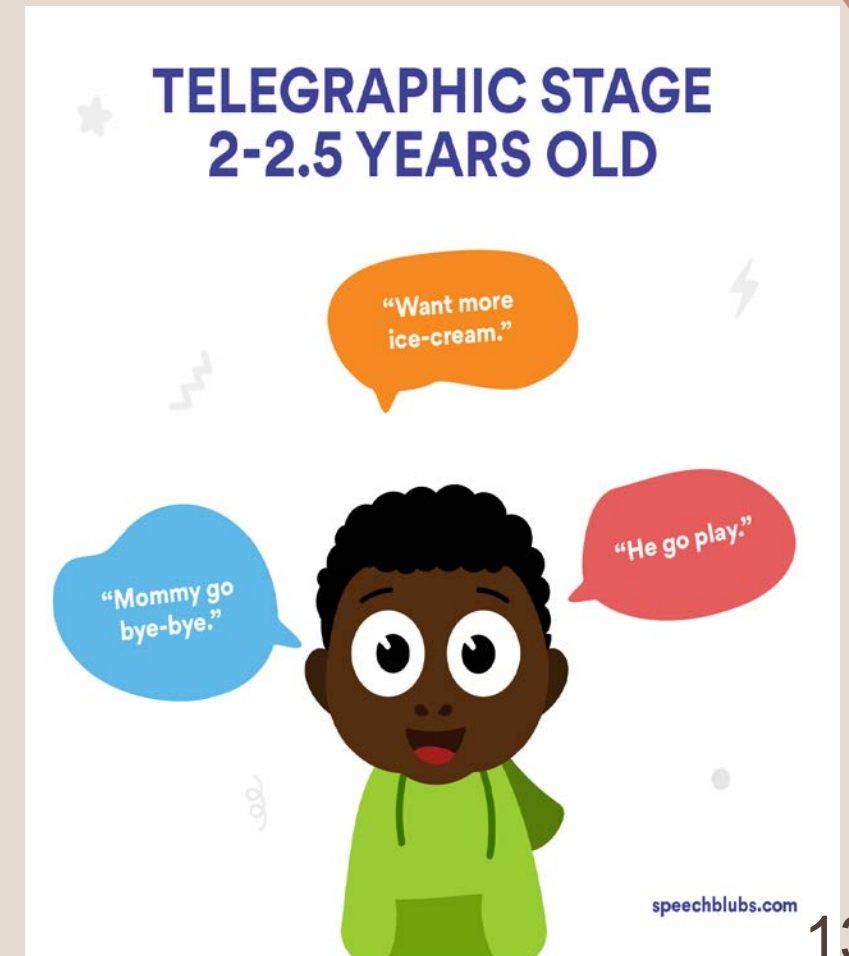
FIRST WORD STAGE



- This is when they transition from babbling to meaningful words
- It may start as verbal imitations. Becomes clearer with time
- May begin as early as 9 months of age to 15 months of age
- Most first words are nouns (parent/ caregiver names, siblings, objects in the home, etc.)
- Not A, B, Cs and 1,2,3 songs/ rhymes
- First words are functional/ communicative

VOCABULARY EXPANSION STAGE

- Children rapidly expanding their vocabulary; some overextension and underextension of words
- Actively adding up and expanding their understanding of words and using them
- Start combining two-three words
- Combining can take the form of noun + noun, noun + verb, etc., e.g., Daddy car, Mummy see, etc.
- Between the ages 24- 30 months; often called the telegraphic stage



GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT STAGE

- Understanding and producing basic grammatical structures based on usage and active learning
- Begin forming sentences that are more meaningful and structurally accurate
- This continues for a long period as child acquires various language concepts
- Typical errors are expected at the beginning e.g. past tense errors, plural marking errors etc.
- Usually begins at 36 months and progresses through preschool and school age.
- Zeal or motivation to practice new words that they learn

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SUPPORTING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- Active play and interaction (role play & pretend play)
- Turn taking
- Talking in simple clear language
- Shared book reading
- Following your child's lead; interest-tailored activities
- Scaffolding
- Commenting
- Recoding
- Using gestures
- Modeling

TAKEAWAYS

- Children do not just start talking when “they get to that age”
- Supporting their early language development is crucial to building their socioemotional skills, academic success, vocation and independence in future
- We owe it to our children; It is their right on us.
- Let’s not comfortably stay in the “wait and see” bubble. Reach out to experts for advice and referral services
- Again, children are not born to be on “autopilot”. We as adults in the environment are their ladder of support.
- Reach out. Speak to an expert. Seek help if needed.

**Thank
You**

