

## A general introduction to child language acquisition

HESP 400

## General outline

- Precursors to language
  - Nonlinguistic communication
  - Early cognitive development
- Phonological development
- Semantic development
- Morphology & syntax development
- Pragmatic development
- Theories of development

## Nurture

- In the first half of this century, most researchers assumed oral communication skills were learned
- Implications:
  - Parents taught children to speak
  - Language disorders could be the result of especially poor teaching
  - Presumably, related mammals could be taught the same way

## Nature

- Alternative argument is that much of language acquisition is innate
- Implications:
  - What parents do doesn't matter
  - Children have built in ability/rules - part of genetic endowment
  - Animals shouldn't be able to learn language, and won't necessarily have any overlap in abilities

## Nature vs. Nurture

- Differing viewpoints on this lead to different types of research - and thus the kinds of things we'll be talking about throughout the rest of the semester

## Some introductory data

- Animal communication
- Chimpanzee language studies
- Children who aren't given language exposure