

LIV SOME SENTENCES OF A BOY THREE YEARS EIGHT MONTHS OLD.

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In a recent article (7) Mrs. Nice makes an appeal for the study of the sentence stage of children's speech development. In reply to this appeal I began to take down the sentences of little Jack, my neighbor.

Jack was three years eight months old when I began to observe him, and the observation period lasted a month. I saw Jack, during that month, several times a day, and took him into my house almost every day.

He is a lively, healthy, active and friendly child, but somewhat slow in mental growth. His I. Q. is only 91, and at three years eight months his mental age is only three years two months. But this backwardness does not appear to a casual observer. Jack is interested in pictures and recognizes them very well; he is easily trained, as can be shown by the following fact: I explained to him three times—on the occasion of his three consecutive visits to me—that he must not come in without knocking and that after knocking he must wait until someone opens the door for him—and he never comes in without knocking anymore.

He was very precocious in developing motor activity. A month before he was two years old he was given a tricycle. He learned to ride it almost without help, and at two was riding surprisingly well, guiding it with confidence and mastery. His little legs were somewhat too short to reach the pedals, but he stretched and strained them, and rode several hours a day—obviously, with intervals.

At the age of two and a half he offered once an unusual sight: perched up high on a painter's ladder which had been left leaning on the outer wall of his parents' house, he stood on the upper rung, reaching the roof, and frantically called his mother in sudden realization that he did not know how to go down. Later undaunted by his first fear upon reaching the top, he repeated the operation several times, arriving at a great dexterity in climbing the ladder.

During the observation period here analyzed, he showed both ability and skill in building little constructions with blocks. He makes original combinations out of dominoes, solving the prob-

lems of equilibrium with ease. He handles scissors fairly well, in spite of the fact that he had not been given scissors before. He can turn somersaults and climb trees.

Jack is ambidexterous, while his younger brother seems to be left-handed. The children's paternal uncle is left-handed.

He is the first-born child of a laborer. Thus the present study may have an additional interest, inasmuch as contrary to accounts published so far, the child under discussion is not a member of the writer's own household, neither does he come regularly in contact with the observer.

The record of his sentences covers the period of nine days, during which time I took down all his utterances on six different occasions, devoting each time about an hour to this task. In most cases his sentences were offered voluntarily—in soliloquy, or addressed to me, without any provocation on my part. Some of them, however, are answers to my questions. A few are a result of his little brother's joining him; some were addressed to my own son who happened to come in just then. But Jack is not as talkative as are most children of his age. He plays with the toys I give him and is content to emit sounds of satisfaction, pleasure, disappointment, etc., to sing to himself repeating the same syllable, and to cry out occasionally: "see here", or "look here", or "it's big, a biiiig house", etc. Very often he is altogether silent, playing busily and contentedly a long while.

The list obtained by me includes exclamations, syllables used in singing, and 201 sentences, with the total of 974 words. This makes the average length of his sentences 4.8 words. Of these 201 sentences, 141, or 70% are complete; 56, or 28% incomplete, and the remaining 2% are sentence-words and laconic, elliptical answers to my questions.

The parts of speech omitted are: articles (4); personal pronouns (29); verbs (30), of which 5 predicates, 20 auxiliaries, and 5 copulae; prepositions (9). In the Binet-Simon test he failed in the sixth number of the three-year test because he missed all the articles when trying to repeat the syllables.

Jack has not yet mastered his inflections. He has not even arrived at the stage where children apply the general rule with pitiless logic and rebel against exceptions. One example of this however is found in his "I see some mans." But in all other cases he uses the different forms indiscriminately, interchanging "this" and "these", using verbs in first and third person irrespective of the subject, and making short work of the tenses.

Thus we have: "I'm goin' eat *those apple*"; "Walk by feet" (the cow walks); "Me been"; "I come back" (future); "I tear" (past); "This is tear" (torn); "Them are not birdies, them is rats"; "he want"; "Them are works", and spontaneous correction: "them works", for "they work".

All parts of speech are found in Jack's sentences. The construction of his complete sentences is correct. Of the 201 sentences seven are compound and seven complex.

There are fourteen negative sentences in the list, 22 interrogative and ten imperative. Thirteen of the interrogative sentences were asked with the view of obtaining information: in four cases the name was wanted, five times Jack made an inquiry into the name or purpose of actions or conditions, three times the question was a result of missing an object, and the remaining interrogative sentences were asked either rhetorically—almost with an exclamatory meaning—or with the intention of drawing attention to his work, i. e. almost imperative in meaning, like: "Look here, see there?" or the triumphant "How is that?" or "You know that?" followed by his own answer, without waiting for a reply.

From the above it seems that Jack is truly "not a man of words, but a man of action". As I said above, he talks surprisingly little. Neither does he ask many questions: not 11% of the recorded sentences are interrogative, and, as I have shown, not all of these are really questions. He is concerned mostly with names of objects and statement of facts. But in this he requires exactness. Thus once—some days after I stopped recording his sentences—he was looking at pictures in a Mother Goose book. I read to him: "This piggie went to market", while he looked at the illustration. He seemed perplexed and wanted to interrupt me, but didn't. When I finished, he asked: "What is this?" "A pig"—I said. "No, this is not a pig", he earnestly protested, still keeping his perplexed expression. "Well, then what is it?" I asked in turn. "I don't know", he answered slowly, gravely. Then, suddenly, with unadulterated satisfaction at having solved his problem: "It hog—it is a hog; mhm, a hog." In the Binet-Simon test he answered the question: "are you a little boy or a little girl?" with an emphatic: "No, I am a grea' big boy".

In what stage is Jack's speech development? As compared to most samples published, Jack's speech is somewhat retarded. According to Trettien's classification (17) Jack is in the stage of

early inflected sentences, and English speaking children whose sentences he gives as an example of this stage are between the ages of 22 months and 3 years, and only one is four years old.

Stern (13 and 13a) bases his classification upon syntax alone. According to his classification, Jack is only now entering the fourth period of speech—that formed by the appearance of the subordinate sentence. Stern puts the beginning of this period at two and a half years, when, he claims, "the purely parataxical sentence-formation is left behind." But Jack's complex sentences are all parataxical, and very few in number (seven out of 201, or about 3%).

According to Mrs. Nice's (1) classification, Jack is still in the short sentence stage, or perhaps just entering the transition stage. The average length of his sentence (4.8) is slightly above the 4.5 limit set by Mrs. Nice. He has quite a few inflections—some used correctly, many more incorrectly; he has 14 compound and complex sentences (almost 7%).

There seems to be, then, in Jack's case, an interesting correlation between his I. Q., his speech development and his motor activity.

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(Only those books and articles are mentioned which treat the child's use of the *sentence*. Hence studies of children's vocabularies as such are omitted.)

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LIST OF JACK'S SENTENCES.

October 1925.

October 14.

1. He is in the house. (Answer to my question.)
2. He is coming around this way.
3. Brother! Come here!
4. Brother, come here, come here!
5. Play wi' the blocks, come on, play wi' the blocks.
6. I'm goin' put that there.
7. These back here.
8. I didn't talk. (Answer to "what did you say?")
9. I am six. (Answer to "how old are you, Jack?")
10. He is four. (Answer to how old is brother?)
11. He is eight. (Answer to how old is Max?)
12. He is.. he is..

13. I don't know what he is. Que. "What is your brother's name, Jack?")
- 14., 15. Make me (I shall make me) a house, make me a big house.
16. Look how big.
17. Oo! Look how biiig, bi-i-i-i-g!
18. Look how ish big.
19. Ouway! (when his house tumbles).
20. Way up a-tap!
21. We will knock this down.
22. All right!
23. There a door!
24. Oh, there a door!
25. How is that? (triumphantly, showing the door of the house he built.)
26. See'm way up a-top now.
27. I want a apple, I do!
28. I am Jack Warren. (Que. "What is your name?")
29. Brother's got Warren too. ("And what is your brother's name?")
30. Aw right, put them on right! (several times, singing)
31. M-hm (yes) (Que. "Jack, do you know the story of the three bears?" M-hm (no) (Que. "Yes? then tell it to me, will you?) Yes sir. (Que. "Why, are you too busy?")
32. Gran said let him come back again.
33. I'm goin' eat those apple.
34. Don', brother.
35. Don', tha's dirty!
36. 's dirty!
37. I want to read more.
38. Them are folks.
39. That's a kitty.
40. What's this?
41. That's a fish.
42. It's a dog.
43. Walk by feet. (Answer to question, "How does a cow go?")
44. What's runnin' back st'eet car?
45. Them are works. (these people are working)
46. Them works. (Spontaneous correction of the preceding sentence.)
47. That's mam.
48. That's a 'ady. (Spontaneous correction of the preced. sent.)

49. That man's making that hog get down.
50. What's that man gettin' that hog down for?
51. That baby-shickies.
52. That's a bird.
53. That do look funny.
54. You know that?
- 55, 56. It's no hog; it's fox.
57. That's a shree. (tree)
58. See the fish?
59. What's that for?
60. He (accent) got fish.
61. He got (accent) a fish.

October 15

63. Shu-shrain! (=choo-choo train, referring to the design on dominoes.)
63. That's a shu-shrain.
64. I'm goin' home now.
65. I'm comin' back.
66. To toilet. (Answer to a question).
67. It's a ----- pony.
68. He 'm doin' anything. (Answer to a question, referring to a picture.)
69. That's a shrain.
70. That's a bird.
71. These are birds too.
72. I don't know. (Answer to a question).
73. O, there is a big turkey and many little turkeys.
74. Them are bi-i-irds, ooh! (seeing an owl and an eagle on a picture.)
75. Ooooh, look-out (or may be it was *lookit*), a big shickie!
76. I wan' t' look sumore.

October 16

77. Wan' play wi' blocks.
78. Play with them (=I want to etc.)
79. I want these blocks—'ittle (=little) ones.
80. Goin' make me a bridge.
81. Oh, see, a bridge.
82. Oh, brother, playin' wi' teemy blocks.
83. That is a step.
84. This is a step.
85. (Singing) Make somethin' (=I shall make me something)
86. (Continuing to sing). Make me somepn'. (repeats several times.)

87. I make me sh:rain.
88. Put (=I'll put) back in. (Singing, repeats several times.)
89. Neh—don' get mine. (to his brother.)
90. Naw, don't; you take that.
91. I don't want this.
92. Put (=I'll put) these the same. (repeats in song.)
93. Look 'ere, how nice.
94. I want play wi' them.
95. This is red.
96. Look 'ere, now I get it.
97. Now, see there? I get them.
98. Get me (=I shall get me) a ball.
99. 'et me have them.
100. I want it.
101. Jump on the book! (=the ball jumped on the book)
102. Better play (future, first person) with them.
103. Put (=I shall put) these in here.
104. Mmmm! get (=I shall get) the ball.
105. This won't fit.
106. This will fit.
107. This odwone (Other one) won't fit (to himself, arranging dominoes in a box.)
108. This is all here. (Repeats, singing, several times, then continues to sing without words.)
109. Look here, brother.
110. Brother, brother, see there?
111. Where is any more?
112. I want some more.
113. Brother, what you doin'?
114. Here's another one.
115. See here?
116. Been way off this mornin'.
117. Me been.
118. I been way off, I been; me, and daddy, and brother, and mama.
119. Daddy's way off, workin' wi' his car.
120. Car did, car, mhm, the car; he is way off.
121. Let me put them in here.
122. O, it turned over.
123. Look here, dat turned over again!
124. See there! it can run.
125. Mv shoo-shoo didn' fall down.

126. Here it goes now.
 127. It's rain.
 128. 's rainin' there.
 129. Can't go out in themud; it's rainin'.
 130. I got m' shoes wet.
 131. Where is Arnol?
 132. Court?
 133. Where is Court Arnold?
 134. I go home now.
 135. I want candy.
 136. Mama's got some.
 137. I come back.

October 18 (after his afternoon nap, less talkative than usual, though not in bad humor.)

138. I'll get the ball.
 139. We-e-ell, daddy gave it to me.
 140. I want play wi' big blocks.
 141. I want a bushel, a bushel of blocks, a big bushel of blocks.

October 20

142. Here, I can. (cut out paper dolls)
 143. I'm goin' write to daddy in the mohnin'.
 144. He is way off.
 145. Now, see that? I tear (=tore) both pieces.
 146. Look here—it don't come off.
 147. I can cut it off, and I will.
 148. Oh, this is! . . . (his breath is taken away by accident with the paper)
 149. This is tear! (=torn)
 150. Goin' get me one o' them things.
 151. I want a pencil write.
 152. These are hard scissors, they are; ouuh!
 153. What you sewing stockin' up for?
 154. We go (we went) aunie's (to auntie's) house 'smornin' way off, an' it's (it was) snowin'.
 155. Pfff! I cut sumore 'adies off!
 156. I cut the birdies off.
 157. Them are not birdies, them is rats.
 158. I cut rats off.
 159. Look 'ere, I put it on my scissors. (repeats three times)
 160. Put it on the floor.
 161. That is . . .
 162. That's . . .

163. I don't know what this is.
 164. I see the niggers.
 165. I see some mans.
 166. I want now anotherwn.
 167. Who is that girl?
 168. I n' now where it is.
 169. Fits this for me. (fix—request.)
 170. I'm goin' t' toilet.
 171. I' m comin' back.
 172. Mamma, I am goin' over there again.
- October 22
173. I want t' read—in there.
 174. That's a big horse.
 175. Look this dog.
 176. He want bite that man.
 177. That man goin' up the tree.
 178. Same 'ike my daddy.
 179. A dog back there—in there.
 180. See that big dog?
 181. How do (follows verb which I could not get) many rocks
 in the water?
 182. That's a dog too.
 183. Why is his tail way up in th' air?
 184. What's matte wi' his tail?
 185. What's this runnin' up in th' air?
 186. Make me (future, first pers.) a bridge.
 187. I want the shrain.
 188. Make me a bushel of towns. (first pers., future.)
 189. I know where my home is.
 190. You get out o' my way.
 191. Where's that other shrain?
 192. Now, you can't have this.
 193. Gimme sumore.
 194. Get (—I shall get) these, now; wanna putem in.
 195. Ooh, shickie, oh, timy shickie!
 196. That's the dog; he is drinkin' water; he is in the water
 already.
 197. I wanta come in, I am tahred standin' here.
 198. I got book home an' I didn't bring to you.
 199. I want pictures.
 200. I want to read.
 201. I want a bushel of pictures, I do.