

# **Language development as a joint process: Why the simultaneous learning of Form, Content, and Use is more a help than a hindrance**

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To acquire language, children need to learn form (e.g., phonology), content (e.g., word meaning), and use (e.g., finding the right words to convey a communicative intent). One could imagine that children first acquire the form, then associate the form with content, and only then learn how to use form and content adequately in a communicative context. The reality is that children have to deal with aspects of form, content, and use simultaneously. Indeed, experimental studies suggest that the timelines of acquisition of these dimensions largely overlap, indicating that children learn them in parallel, not one at a time. While this fact makes language acquisition seem even more challenging than we previously thought, I argue that the joint learning of form, content, and use may be more of a help than a hindrance: These dimensions are interdependent in many ways and can therefore constrain/disambiguate each other. I will illustrate this idea based on my previous and current research combining experimental and computational modeling.