

### 1 Grammar in the Real World

**A** What do you know about learning a language? Read the passage from a textbook. How do humans learn to communicate?

## Children and Language Learning

Jake is two years old, and he is a typical American child. He plays, laughs, and cries. He also talks. He can understand about 200 English words. He uses fixed phrases. For example, he says "all gone" when he finishes his food. **Until he is about four or five, Jake will talk** mostly about things around him – where he is and what he is doing at the moment. **When he is five years old, he will understand** thousands of words and will speak normally. **Before he is six, he will learn** to form correct grammatical sentences.

**When he starts school, he will begin** to read and write. **After he starts to read, he will learn** to speak about things that are not happening right around him – the past, the future, and faraway people and places. **Once he is literate,<sup>1</sup> Jake will learn** about a thousand words every year. **When he is 18, he will be** ready for college. He will have all the language and world knowledge he needs for his classes. Then, for the rest of his life, he will continue to learn.

Was Jake born with the ability to learn to speak, read, and write? Many experts say yes. Animals often live close to human beings, but they do not learn human language. Therefore, Jake must have a natural ability to learn his language. However, he speaks English only because his parents and the people around him use English.

Learning how to communicate is a combination of natural, genetic features<sup>2</sup> and our social environment. We need both things to be "human."

<sup>1</sup>literate: able to read and write | <sup>2</sup>genetic feature: a characteristic of living things passed on from parents to children

