Child and Language Development

Introduction to EDI 111

What is language?

How do children acquire language?

How do children develop?

This presentation addresses the question: How do children develop?

What is “child development”?

Development = changes in a person’s long term growth, feelings and patterns of thinking

Development occurs in 3 “domains”:

Physical Development – includes body changes, motor skills and the effects of aging

Cognitive Development – refers to methods and style of thinking, language skills and use, strategies for remembering and recalling information

Psychosocial Development – refers to personal development and relationships
Development occurs in 3 “domains”: Physical, Cognitive, Psychosocial. Psychosocial Development relates to changes in feelings, relationships with others and the development of a “sense of self.”

Look for all 3 areas in the articles you read for Activity 1.4.

An important part of child development is the development and wiring of the brain, which starts before the baby is born. Look at these websites for your first introduction to how the brain develops:

- [http://www.fcs.uga.edu/pubs/PDF/FACS03 -1.pdf](http://www.fcs.uga.edu/pubs/PDF/FACS03 -1.pdf)
- [http://www.mesaunitedway.org/readytolearnl.html](http://www.mesaunitedway.org/readytolearnl.html)

Notice the following key points:
- A baby’s brain is “wired” by what happens early in life
- Unused connections may deteriorate
- Early language exposure is critical in language development

Now read the articles in Activity 1.4 for an in-depth view of early childhood development and the “wiring of the brain.”
What is Language?

Before you can understand language development, you need to understand some basic things about language itself. Here are the answers to some critical questions from the website: http://www.kidsource.com/ASHA/child_language.html

What is language?
What is speech?
How do children learn language?

What is language?

Language is a code that we learn to use in order to communicate ideas and express our wants and needs. Reading, writing, speaking, and some gesture systems are all forms of language.

What is speech?

Speech is the spoken form of language.

How do children learn language?

Children learn language and speech by listening to the language around them and practicing what they hear. In this way, they figure out the rules of the language code. It is not learned all at once but in stages over time.

13 design features of language

Chapter 1 in your textbook, Born to Talk, discusses the 13 design features of language by Charles Hockett.

These features define the characteristics of human speech, but most of the features really are characteristic of human “language”, not just speech.
A definition of language

Let’s go back and look at the definition of language:

Language is a code that we learn to use in order to communicate ideas and express our wants and needs. Reading, writing, speaking, and some gesture systems are all forms of language.

This is a simple definition of language from the American Speech Language Hearing Association website.

You will learn a more complete definition of language in EDI 121.

The “code” of language

However, let’s focus on the word “code” in the definition:

Language is a code that we learn to use in order to communicate ideas and express our wants and needs. Reading, writing, speaking, and some gesture systems are all forms of language.

The building blocks of language

The language “code” has building blocks which go from the smallest unit of the language to the way that the units are combined to create meaning.

These are the building blocks of language:
- Conversations/stories
- Phrases or Sentences
- Words
- Sounds

Click to learn more

Think about a baby learning to talk. The baby might follow this exact pattern as she learns language:

And then there are rules that dictate the flow of communication in these situations. For example, turn-taking.

Click to learn more
The building blocks of language

In Lesson 4, you will examine the stages of language development and observe an infant and toddler. Notice where the children are in this hierarchy of language development!

Key Points

Key Points to remember:

- Language is a “code” that has building blocks and follows rules
- As you study children and how they develop language, you need to be aware of the codes and rules of the language to understand the child’s development

What is Linguistics?

Remember, that language is built from the following “building blocks”

Linguistics, the study of language, has terms for each of these “building blocks”:

Linguistics Terminology

These additional terms describe the study of the parts of a language.

Why is learning this terminology important?

- Linguistics terms are used in many of your textbooks and readings, so understanding the terms is essential for your learning.
- Using the correct terminology will help you communicate effectively as a professional.
- This website contains basic “linguistic” definitions. http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/3920/
Summary

This presentation has answered the question:

What is language?

You should now be able to:
• define language
• define speech
• define linguistics
• define the following linguistic terms: phoneme, morpheme, syntax, discourse, pragmatics
How is Language Acquired?

An introduction to theories of language acquisition

How is language acquired?

Harvey Daniels in “Nine Ideas About Language” says:

“Children learn their native language swiftly, efficiently, and largely without instruction.”

Nature or Nurture?

There are numerous theories about language acquisition, and they include 2 main schools of thought:

Nature

These theorists propose that we are pre-wired for language learning. It is part of our human “nature.”

Nurture

These theorists propose that language is an entirely learned behavior.

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What do you think?

Language Acquisition Theories

Nativist Theory

The nativist approach, also a linguistic approach was fostered by Chomsky.

He proposed a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that is “an innate language reservoir filled with information about the rules of language structure”. It is a specific part of the brain, designed to process language.
Behaviorism was a "nurturist" approach. A "behaviorist" approach to language acquisition would say that children are "conditioned" to learn language by a stimulus-response pattern. For example, when they are babbling and happen to say a word, then they are rewarded. Read about "behaviorism" at this website: http://www.funderstanding.com/behaviorism.cfm

A compromise between "nature" and "nurture" is the "interactionist" approach which recognizes that many factors influence language development.

There are 3 well-known theories in this category:
- developmental cognitive theory (Jean Piaget)
- information processing model
- social interaction (Lev Vygotsky)

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Developmental Cognitive Theory (Jean Piaget)

Piaget was a Swiss psychologist who dedicated his life to the "biological explanation of knowledge". Piaget described 4 major developmental stages in children that describe how a child learns. He viewed language acquisition as just another example of general learning.

View this website to learn more about Piaget: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/databank/entries/dh23pi.html

Information Processing Theory

IPA Sometimes referred to as IPA for Information Processing Approach, this theory describes language acquisition in the context of how the brain processes information and draws comparisons between the brain and a computer.

Social Interaction

Vygotsky proposed that "social interaction plays an important role in the learning process". His "Zone of Proximal Development" describes the difference between what a child will do on his/her own or with guidance.

View this website to learn more about Vygotsky: http://www.funderstanding.com/vygotsky.cfm