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Study of Cultural and socioeconomic effects over development of children

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Introduction : While most children throughout the world develop language at similar rates and without difficulty, cultural and socioeconomic differences have been shown to influence development. An example of cultural differences in language development can be seen when comparing the interactions of mothers in the United States with their infants with mothers in Japan. Mothers in the United States use more questions, are more information-oriented, and use more grammatically correct utterances with their 3-month-olds.[citation needed] Mothers in Japan, on the other hand, use more physical contact with their infants, and more emotion-oriented, nonsense, and environmental sounds, as well as baby talk, with their infants. These differences in interaction techniques reflect differences in "each society's assumptions about infants and adult-to-adult cultural styles of talking."

Specifically in North American culture, maternal race, education, and socioeconomic class influence parent-child interactions in the early linguistic environment.[citation needed] When speaking to their infants, mothers from middle class "incorporate language goals more frequently in their play with their infants," and in turn, their infants produce twice as many vocalizations as lower class infant Mothers from higher social classes who are better educated also tend to be more verbal, and have more time to spend engaging with their infants in language. Additionally, lower class infants may receive more language input from their siblings and peers than from their mothers.

Social preconditions

It is crucial that children are allowed to socially interact with other people who can vocalize and respond to questions. For language acquisition to develop successfully, children must be in an environment that allows them to communicate socially in that language. Children who have learnt sound, meaning and grammatical system of language that can produce clear sentence may still not have the ability to use language effectively in various social circumstance. Social interaction is the footing stone of language.

There are a few different theories as to why and how children develop language. The most popular—and yet heavily debated—explanation is that language is acquired through imitation.

This theory has been challenged by Lester Butler, who argues that children do not use the grammar that an adult would use. Furthermore, "children's language is highly resistant to alteration by adult intervention", meaning that children do not use the corrections given to them by an adult. The two most accepted theories in language development are psychological and functional.[citation needed] Psychological explanations focus on the mental processes involved in childhood language learning. Functional explanations look at the social processes involved in learning the first language.

Different aspects

- Phonology involves the rules about the structure and sequence of speech sounds.
- Semantics consists of vocabulary and how concepts are expressed through words.
- Grammar involves two parts.
- The first, syntax, is the rules in which words are arranged into sentences.
- The second, morphology, is the use of grammatical markers (indicating tense, active or passive voice etc.).
- Pragmatics involves the rules for appropriate and effective communication. Pragmatics involves three skills:
- using language for greeting, demanding etc.,
- changing language for talking differently depending on who it is you are talking to;
- following rules such as turn taking, staying on topic.
- Each component has its own appropriate developmental periods.

Phonological development

Babies can recognize their mother's voice from as early as few weeks old. It seems like they have a unique system that is designed to recognize speech sound. Furthermore, they can differentiate between certain speech sounds. A significant first milestone in phonetic development is the babbling stage (around the age of six months). This is the baby's way of practicing his control over that apparatus. Babbling is independent from the language. Deaf children for instance, babble the same way as hearing ones. As the baby grows older, the babbling increases in frequency and starts to sound more like words (around the age of twelve months). Although every child is an individual with different pace of mastering speech, there is a tendency to an order of which speech sounds are mastered:

Vowels before consonants

Stop sounds before any other consonant sounds (for example: 'p','t','b')

Place of articulation – labials, alveolar, velars, alovepalatals, and interdentals in that order by the age of 4. That means that there is some order to the development of the physical system in young children.

Early phonetic processes

As the children's ability to produce sound develops, their ability to perceive the phonetic contrast of their language develops. The better they get in mastering the sound, the more sensitive they become to the changes in those sounds in their language once they get exposed to it. They learn to isolate individual phenomes while speaking which also serves as the basis of reading.

Some processes that occur in early age:

Syllable deletion – stressed syllables are emphasis that may be given to certain syllables in a word. They are more likely to be retained in children's pronunciation than unstressed syllables (less emphasis on the sound) because they are more salient to children in an early language acquisition process. So children may say helikat instead of helicopter or fowe instead of telephone. That way, they don't pronounce the more emphasized sound in the word.

Semantic development

The average child masters about fifty words by the age of eighteen months. These might include words such as, milk, water, juice and apple (noun-like words). Afterwards they acquire 12 to 16 words a day. By the age of six, they master about 13 to 14 thousand words.

The most frequent words include adjective-like expressions for displeasure and rejection such as 'no'. They also include social interaction words, such as "please" and "bye".

There are three stages for learning the meaning of new words:

Whole object assumption:

A new word refers to a whole object. For example, when an eighteen-months old child sees a sheep and his mother points at it and says the word 'sheep', the child infers that the word 'sheep' describes the whole animal and not parts of it (such as color, shape, etc.

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