



Chapter 9

Language Development Vygotsky



Language Development

- During the preschool years, language skills become more sophisticated
- Young children begin this period with reasonably good linguistic (language) capabilities, but gaps in both language production (speech) and comprehension (understanding)
- By the end of the preschool years, they can hold their own with adults.



(Language Development, continued)

- Between late twos and mid-threes, sentence *length* increases.
- **SYNTAX** (*the ways words and phrases are combined to make sentences*) doubles each month.



(Language Development, continued)

- By age three, children use plurals and possessive forms of nouns (boys/boy's), employ the past tense (adding -ed), use articles (the/a), and can ask and answer complex questions ("Where did you say my book is?").



43 Berko's Test of Children's Syntax

Illustrates the acquisition of some of the rules of Language and supports Chomsky's claims of an inborn ability to find grammatical structure.

This is a wug.

Now there is another one.
There are two of them.
There are two _____.

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WUGS

(Language Development, continued)

- By six, the average child has a vocabulary of 14,000 words.
- Preschoolers begin to acquire the principles of **GRAMMAR**, the system of rules that determine how our thoughts can be expressed.



Some more aspects of language development during the preschool years...

→ Preschoolers engage mostly in **PRIVATE SPEECH**, *speech by children that is spoken and directed to themselves.*

- Vygotsky argues that private speech facilitates children's thinking, helps them control their behavior, solve problems and reflect (private speech = cognitive development)
- 20 to 60 % of what children say is private speech



(language development during the preschool years continued)

- **SOCIAL SPEECH** (*speech directed toward another person and meant to be understood by that person*) increases.

- Children speak to others rather than babbling/speaking to self
- Want others to listen
- Become frustrated when unable to make themselves understood
- Adapt their speech to others



Vygotsky's View of Cognitive Development: Taking Culture into Account

→ Culture and societies influence cognitive development.

- Cognition proceeds because of social interactions where partners jointly work to solve problems (contrasts with Piaget's emphasis on individual figuring things out alone).



Cognition proceeds because of social interactions where partners jointly work to solve problems...

- The partnership is determined by cultural and societal factors
 - Institutions that promote development (play groups, preschools)
 - Emphasizing certain tasks (school, work)



According to **Vygotsky**, children's cognitive abilities increase when information is provided within their **ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD)**, *the level at which a child can almost, but not fully, perform a task independently, but can do so with the assistance of someone more competent..*



(Vygotsky's **ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD)**, continued)

- The assistance provided by other is called **SCAFFOLDING**, *the support for learning and problem solving that encourages independence and growth.*
- The aid that more accomplished individuals provide to learners comes in the form of *cultural tools* (the actual physical items such as pencils, paper, calculators, and computers)



- Vygotsky's view has become increasingly influential in the last decade.
- It helps explain a growing body of research attesting to the importance of social interaction in promoting cognitive development.

Criticisms...

- The zone of proximal development is not precise and not easily testable.
- His theory is silent on how basic cognitive functions such as attention and memory develop.


