Language Development
An Introduction

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“Say that again. I didn’t hear you. I was listening to my toast.”
Jessica Owens, age 4

To my gran’kids,
Cassidy, Dakota, and Zavier.
There is no single way in which children learn to communicate. Each child follows an individual developmental pattern just as you did. Still, it is possible to describe a pattern of general communication development and of English specifically. This text attempts such descriptions and generalizations but emphasizes individual patterns, too.

New to This Edition

For those readers familiar with older editions, you’ll find much has changed and, hopefully, much that you’ll like. The changes in the 10th edition of Language Development: An Introduction are as follows:

- I rewrote the entire section on working memory in light of the plethora of new research on this topic and its importance for language use.
- I provided new video links. Although YouTube provides a wealth of videos and I have used them in the past, several professors had written to me to tell me that the links no longer worked. Still, I encourage you to look to YouTube for examples of children using language.
- Although I’ve resisted an entire chapter on bilingualism and dialectal differences because it highlights difference rather than stressing similarity, I have consolidated the bilingual research into Chapter 8 in an effort to make it seem less disjointed.
- Several students have told me they enjoy that unlike other texts this one seems to talk to them. Encouraged by this feedback, I have continued to improved readability throughout with more thorough explanations and clarification/simplification of terms.
- Chapter 2 is shorter and reconceptualized to include learning theories. There is always the pull between more professors who have a linguistic background and those with less theoretical training. As in the past I’ve tried to keep the text practical and employ theories where they enlighten and not make the text into a doctrinaire thesis.
- As in the past, I’ve provided more child language examples throughout to better illustrate language structures.
- At the suggestion of several respected colleagues, I have increased the discussion of the importance of play for development of language.
- In addition, I broke up and simplified the discussion of reading comprehension, which was needlessly difficult and entangled.
- And, of course, I updated the research. I spent more than 8 months just reading before I even began to edit. For those compulsive types who count number of bibliographic entries, you’ll find approximately 250 new references along with several retirements of older material. This is the result of reading several hundred new research articles.
That’s enough to exhaust me just talking about it. My hope is that you’ll also find the new edition very useful.

Hopefully, those of you who will one day become parents should appreciate the value of this text as a guideline to development. If you plan to work with children with disabilities and without, you’ll find that typical development can provide a model for evaluation and intervention. The developmental rationale can be used to decide on targets for training and to determine the overall remediation approach.

In recognition of the importance of the developmental rationale as a tool and of the changing perspectives in child language development, the 10th edition offers expanded coverage of preschool- and school-age language development. Pragmatics receives increased attention, as does the conversational context within which most language development occurs. If you’re a prospective speech-language pathologist, you will find these developmental progressions valuable when making decisions concerning materials to use with children who have speech and language impairments. As consumers of educational and therapeutic products, you must be especially sensitive to the philosophy that governs the organization of such materials. Many materials claim to be developmental in design but are not. I recall opening one such book to find *please* and *thank you* as the first two utterances to be taught to a child with deafness. These words violate many of the characteristics of first words.

Experienced teachers, psychologists, or speech-language pathologists need not rely on such prepackaged materials if they have a good base in communication development. An understanding of the developmental process and the use of a problem-solving approach can be a powerful combination in the hands of creative clinicians.

**Acknowledgments**

A volume of this scope must be the combined effort of many people fulfilling many roles, and this one is no exception.

My first thanks go to all those professionals and students, too numerous to mention, who have corresponded or conversed with me and offered criticism or suggestions for this edition. The overall organization of this text reflects the general organization of my own communication development course and that of professionals with whom I have been in contact.

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- My brilliant professional colleague and friend Stacey L. Pavelko, Ph.D., at James Madison University with whom I am currently authoring Sampling Utterances and Grammatical Analysis Revised (SUGAR). SUGAR is a language sample analysis (LSA) tool, and you can visit us at www.sugarlanguage.org to learn more. I’ve alluded to SUGAR in Appendix D.

- My dear friend Professor Omid Mohamadi has kept me alert to new possibilities and given me a fresh perspective on the field of speech-language pathology. I look forward to more collaborations.

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Language development is a process starting early in human life. Infants start without knowing a language, yet by 10 months, babies can distinguish speech sounds and engage in babbling. Some research has shown that the earliest learning begins in utero when the fetus starts to recognize the sounds and speech patterns of its mother's voice and differentiate them from other sounds after birth.[1]. Assessment | Biopsychology | Comparative | Cognitive | Developmental | Language | Individual differences | Personality | Philosophy | Social | Methods | Statistics | Clinical | Educational | Industrial | Professional items | World psychology | Developmental Psychology: Cognitive development · Development of the self · Emotional development · Language development · Moral development · Perceptual development · Personality development · Psychosocial development · Social development · Developmental Language development and literacy. Updated: October 2018. Topic Editor : Susan Rvachew, PhD, McGill University, Canada This topic was developed with the collaboration of the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (CLLRNet). Table of contents. Synthesis. Language Development at an Early Age: Learning Mechanisms and Outcomes from Birth to Five Years. Erika Hoff, PhD Department of Psychology, Florida Atlantic University, USA. October 2009.