



Theories of childhood

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Learning and development

- How do children learn?
- Why do we need to know children's development?



Active Learning: “Constructivism”

Jean Piaget (1896-1980)

- Emphasis on the biological basis of development and the universal progression from stage to stage in every child
- Active learning “constructivism”: children construct knowledge for themselves by actively making sense of their environment.

Example: baby birds are hatched from eggs

- Assimilation

Example: children assume that all animals such as pigs are also hatched from eggs


- Accommodation

Example: a parent might explain that piglets are not hatched from eggs



Piaget's stages of development

- Development was a process of acquiring the principles of formal logic
- Basic logical abilities are referred to as 'operations' or stages
- Children follow these stages in exactly the same order, and development unfolds as a result of the biological processes of growth, and the development of the child's brain.



age	stage	behaviors
0-2	Sensori-motor	The young child learns to interact with the environment by manipulating objects around him/her
2-7	Pre-operational stage	The child's thinking is largely reliant on perception but he or she gradually becomes more capable of logical thinking. On the whole this stage is characterized by egocentrism and a lack of logical thinking
7-11	Concrete operational stage	Year 7 is the 'turning point' in cognitive development because children's thinking begins to resemble 'logical' adult-like thinking. They develop the ability to apply logical reasoning in several areas of knowledge at the same time (such as math, science, or map reading) but this ability is restricted to the immediate context. This means that children at this stage cannot yet generalize their understanding
>11	Formal operation stage	Children are able to think beyond the immediate context in more abstract terms. They are able to carry out logical operations such as deductive reasoning in a systematic way. They achieve 'formal logic'



Criticism of Piaget's stages

- The pre-operational stage

Margaret Donaldson (Scottish child psychologist): Piaget underestimated young children because the tasks tested to children were not natural and child-friendly.

She redesigned the tasks by presenting them in more familiar context.

The results: in familiar circumstances, introduced by familiar adults using language that makes sense to them, children show signs of logical thinking much earlier than Piaget claimed.



PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS?

- It is important for teachers to be sensitive and open to the needs and interests of various age groups and continually monitor their changing needs.
- Careful monitoring and regular feedback from children will help teachers select suitable materials that are developmentally appropriate for the given age group in given context



VYGOTSKY'S THEORY SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

- Emphasis on social environment
- All children were unique learners and able to achieve something with help and support of a more knowledgeable partner
- Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): describes the difference or the 'zone' between the current knowledge of the child and the potential knowledge achievable with some help from more knowledgeable peer or adult.
- ZPD starts with what the child already knows and carefully builds on it according the child's immediate needs to go forward

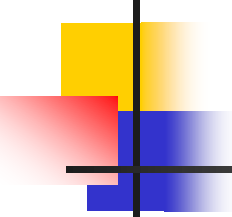


ZPD

Potential development

ZPD

actual development level



Helping children to learn by offering systematic support

- Scaffolding (Jerome Brunner, 1976) is an instructional strategy which ensures that the child can gain confidence and take control of the task or parts of the task as soon as he or she is willing and able to.
- Scaffolding: the interaction between the expert and novice in a problem-solving task.
- The child is offered immediate and meaningful support whenever stuck.
- The adult encourages the child with praise, points out possible difficulties, and makes sure distractions are avoided, ensures that the child stays on track and is motivated to finish the task.
- The support is adjusted to the needs of individual child.



Pedagogical Implications

- The language used in interaction with parents and teachers is important because it is the vehicle through which understanding and learning take place.
- Learning happens in social interactions with others
- Teachers' language use in the classroom is the main source of language input
- Children learn new language forms in meaningful contexts so listening to teacher is essential both for modeling pronunciation and for providing opportunities for understanding new input from context.
- Teachers need to think how to scaffold children's early language production, what questioning techniques to elicit language from the children, and how to motivate them to use language meaningfully with each other.



Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

- Linguistic
- Logico-mathematical
- Musical
- Spatial
- Bodily-kinaesthetic
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Naturalist



Pedagogical Implications

- Teachers should take into account that all children have stronger and weaker aspects of their multiple intelligences and preferred learning styles
- Teachers need to incorporate a variety of activities in classroom
- Example: introducing a new song or rhyme. Can you come up with some techniques which are able to cater all children with regard to the multiple intelligences?



A pause to reflect

- Can you think of some techniques to teach a new song to all children with regard to multiple intelligences?
- How to deal with mixed-ability classes?



Young Learners

(Pinter, 2006)

- Children are at pre-school or in the first couple of years of schooling
- Generally they have a holistic approach to language, which means that they understand meaningful messages but cannot analyse language yet
- They have lower levels of awareness about themselves as language learners as well as about process of learning
- They have limited reading and writing skills even in their first language
- Generally, they are more concerned about themselves than others
- They have limited knowledge about the world
- They enjoy fantasy, imagination, and movement



Older Learners

- These children are well established at school and comfortable with school routines
- They show a growing interest in analytical approaches, which means that they begin to take an interest in language as an abstract system
- They show a growing level of awareness about themselves as language learners and their learning
- They have well developed skills as readers and writers
- They have a growing awareness about the world around us
- They begin to show interest in real life issues



A pause to reflect

- Observe a child learning a language (L1 or FL)
- Explain in terms of the experts' theories
- Think of possible pedagogical implications suppose you have to teach English to her/him



See you next week!

Don't forget to complete the form of
your self-assessment