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LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS AT EARLY AGE

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Abstract

At an early age, verbal communication can develop a lot, not only in terms of increasing the amount of words children use (active speech), but as well as in terms of grammatical structure, diction and also the transition between situational speech to contextual, logical speech, and comprehending of what adults are communicating. Verbal language either speech is the basic structure of language, existing in all regular topics, by dint of which are build writing, reading and internal language. Numerous nouns, verbs, adjectives are used in the speech of a 3-6 year old child. Nevertheless, the stories of children in this age group are made up of short sentences that have some excessively boosted characteristics and present omissions that generate hiatuses within fluidity of stories. Our study of a group of 44 children aged between 3 years old and the oldest were 6, demonstrates the theory that a stimulating social and cultural background produced by family and nursery school promotes young people's language performance and optimal integration into school.

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1. Introduction

Dialogue is an essential part of human existence in the community, with the primary purpose of building relationships with others and knowledge of physical and human reality. It is specific to man not only the extraction, processing and storage of information but also its externalization to be communicated to others. Verbal language either speech is the basic structure of language, existing in all regular topics, by dint of which are build writing, reading and internal language.

Ontogenetically, communication and understanding amongst adults and children are maintained by language, it also enables the absorption of human experiences and offers the necessary components for the process of thinking. Another function is to provide consciousness with elements of updating past events and the ability to predict future actions. Thus, language becomes a tool of psychic activity. (Carroll, 2007)

Language, being an individual manner of manifestation, is formed and also developed in ontogenesis below the impact of teaching. The child on impulse takes over the linguistic models that he will use to communicate from the socio-cultural environment to which he belongs.

The educational actions are meant to enrich these models but also to correct the wrong ones. In order to become effective and especially stimulating, the educational actions aimed at language education from an early age must rely on the aspects of language development particularly of every age (Verza & Verza, 2017).

1.1. Theories of language acquisition at an early age

Theories of language ontogeny raise the issue of the relationship between the innate and the acquired in the process of human development. According to the criterion of the scientific approach of the process of appearance and development of the language to which these theories refer, four main classes were identified: behaviourist theories, nativist theories, cognitive theories and social theories.

According to the behaviourist perspective, language is acquired like any other reinforced behaviour (negative or positive) through rewards and / or sanctions offered by adults who care for / educate / train children. Operational conditioning theorists argue that reinforcement and imitation are the main mechanisms that condition children's language acquisition.

Through a process of trial and error learning and behaviour formation (in which the child is rewarded only for certain groups of sounds and not for all), he gets to form more and more words and also ends up at the right time. As he experiments, he can expand his vocabulary by imitation and will be encouraged again by the enthusiasm and approval of his parents. (Atkinson et al., 2002)

The behavioural model of language acquisition, considered a reductionist theory, because it tries to reduce language skills to the simple elements of the stimulus-response (S-R) is opposed by the Ineistic theory proposed by Chomsky (1988). He approached the problem of language through a theory that captures the fact that "man is made to learn language, he is predestined", which can be translated into innate abilities (performance, skills) of language production. One of the fundamental differences between Skinner and Chomsky is that Skinner analysed the child's language from the perspective of performance (concrete behaviour of the child), while Chomsky approached it from the perspective of competence (the

abilities that the child accumulates), which can be applied to new situations. Chomsky argued that the main element that a child acquires is not behaviour, but language proficiency as a system governed by rules, and is therefore able to generate new sentences and expressions that he has not heard before, in addition to those that he has heard.

According to Ineist theory, children are born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which allows them to combine words into new but grammatically constant utterances and understand the meaning of what they are acquiring, what they can hear. The existence of this mechanism is the element that allows children to develop their language early and quickly (Chomsky, 1988).

Starting from the idea of inheriting what he called the language acquisition mechanism, which operates by extracting the basic rules from the mass of words heard by the child, the child should not be taught to speak, because he can identify the rules of language only by hearing others talking. For the functioning of the language acquisition mechanism, the child has to listen to the spoken language. Other theorists have taken Chomsky's idea that the acquisition of language is hereditary.

Neurolinguist Eric Lenneberg argued that language is an inherited biological capacity of the human being, as evidenced by the fact that language is learned by children without the need to be taught. In addition, Lenneberg said, language must be mastered at a critical time in a child's life, and if this does not happen at the right time, it will never happen again. This critical period is before puberty (12 years old), because Lenneberg believed that later areas of the brain involved in the functioning of language become too rigid and inflexible for learning a new language. Adults who learn a foreign language, he argued, never learn it as they learned their first language (Lenneberg, 2012).

The representative of cognitive theory, Piaget (2022), a follower of the model of self-organization of the psyche, considers that the logical operations necessary to acquire language are not innate, they are formed in the process of interaction between individual (child) and environment. According to this theory, speech development depends on the child's innate ability to acquire and process certain information intellectually. The author argues that the ability to create new words by children confirms that they have intellectual abilities to process information (language development correlates positively with the development of thinking). It has been established that children's first words refer to what they already understand, but the rapid development of thinking between the ages of 1 and 3 creates the preconditions for the child's successful acquisition of language.

Representatives of social theory believe that previous theories have omitted the purposes and meanings of children's use of language. He consider that the acquisition of language by the child has mainly social origins, coming from the need to communicate with other people. From the child's point of view, language is the instrument with which he communicates with the world, and if he wants to have no problems with this world, he develops the instrument, that is, language.

1.2. Mechanisms of language acquisition at an early age

The acquisition of language is one of the most difficult and important acquisitions in the development of the human being. Important for language acquisition are at least three interdependent mechanisms of mental development: cognitive development (the ability to recognize, identify,

discriminate and manipulate), the development of the ability to discriminate and understand. (Albu, 2005).

Language acquisition is not a reflex process, but a selective process, the child imitates and selects the adult's speech as much as his stage of development allows him to do so. One aspect worth mentioning at this level is the importance of the speech model, which is provided by the adult. One can easily identify the high level of importance of this model, as the child builds his entire phonemic system with the model given by the adult as a basis for language configuration (Birch, 2000).

The phonemic system of the language that the child acquires is structured and finalized between the ages 2 to 5 years old. Only when this phonemic system is outlined, adding content to it, does the language itself appear meaningful (Slama, 1999). This aspect is underlined because it is known that human language is a double articulated one - through units of expression and units of content. With the exception of the first level of the linguistic system, the phonetic and phonological level which is characterized as unilateral, only by units of expression, all other levels of the linguistic system - morphological, lexical and syntactic are bilateral defined - by units of expression and units of content. (Slama, 1999).

Thus, it can be concluded that having acquired only the phonemic structure, one cannot speak of communication and instrumental use of language. At this level, most problems can be identified both in the case of the child with hearing impairment, but also in the case of the child with mental impairment. Given the definition of the linguistic sign in Saussure's perspective, the relevance and necessity of associating the unit of expression with the unit of content for the construction of meaning can be made explicit again (Coșeriu, 2013).

After the age of two, verbally differentiated expressions appear in elements belonging to known grammatical categories (nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs) between which relationships are established through morphemes. This aspect leads to the configuration of the morphological side of the language. Around the age of three, the expression becomes closer and closer to the correct one through the acquisition of inflectional categories (conjugation, declension), which allows access to the higher levels of the linguistic system - the lexical and the syntactic (Crețu, 2001).

One can observe a quantitative, but also a qualitative increase of the sentence, increasing the number of words and developing the morphological and syntactic side of the rendered linguistic structures. This is reflected in an expansion of the child's knowledge, cognitive processing and exploration skills. Research in this area has shown that at the age of 2 and a half the child can make a sentence with two or three terms. At the age of three and a half, the language skills are enriched, the child being able to construct complete sentences and phrases, with structure, logical topic, sentences even with four terms. The appearance of phrases composed of sentences in different grammatical relations can also be recorded: coordination or subordination, aspects that translate into the development of cognitive abilities and linguistic competence (Verza & Verza, 2000).

The linguistic structures used by the child are of the "syntagmatic blocks" type of some prefabricated artefacts. Their use is an excellent phonemic and morphological vocal exercise, the linguistic structures being manipulated by the child using imitation. What is important to note is that

during this period the child needs exercise in order to contextualize the linguistic information that he can easily manipulate (Vrăsmaș, 2007).

2. Problem Statement

The linguistic structures used by the child are of the “syntagmatic blocks” type (Slama, 1999) of some prefabricated artefacts. Their use is an excellent phonemic and morphological vocal exercise, the linguistic structures being manipulated by the child using imitation. What is important to note is that during this period the child needs exercise in order to contextualize the linguistic information that he can easily manipulate

After the age of six, contextual language is slowly introduced., which requires an adequate and sufficient use of verbal means to communicate and be understood, regardless of the communication situation. Around the age of 6, the speech flow is practically identical to the of the group (Crețu, 2001).

Around the age of 6, there is an adaptation of speech to the age of the partner. The preschooler shortens his or hers sentences while talking to the younger children, avoid using difficult words, and instead uses gestures and perhaps even simple language. When speaking to older kids, she takes extra care to ensure their understanding. When speaking to elders, he uses comprehensive words and appropriate terms. It is essential to remember that young children's speech is based on verbal structures learned through imitation of family members, adult speech or learned in kindergarten, both of which include the grammatical rules that regulate verbal flow (Stan, 2016).

The application of grammatical rules, the use of abstract language outside of context, and increasing awareness of word origins, prefixes, and suffixes are other ways to enhance language skills.

Mastering the syntax and more generally, grammatical structures that are strengthened by particular instructional activities is the foundation for being able to understand the links between words. Verbal behaviours increasingly subordinate, organize, and energize all other behaviours. Learning to read and write will establish a new quality of language, but it's also critical to assimilate additional information because it increases lexicon by such a substantial amount. Pre-adolescent language development is distinctive due to intense interpersonal communication, wide media exposure, and much higher academic demands.

3. Research Questions

The study sets as a main objective the measuring impact of educational environment from ones background family and kindergarden on the communication development and language for early ages.

The working hypothesis we developed to accomplish this study are the following ones:

- i. We assume that at an early age a socially stimulating environment from a communication point of view leads to superior performance in the area of language acquisition.
- ii. We assume that there are significant differences in the volume of vocabulary of pre-schoolers depending on the educational environment provided by family

4. Purpose of the Study

44 children age 3 to 6 years old who come from different social backgrounds. Group A includes 21 children (12 girls and 9 boys) with an average chronological age of 4,8 years who have attended kindergarten since they were three and who have benefited from a stimulating social and emotional environment in their family, their parents or tutors showing concern for their education. Group B includes 23 children (15 girls and 8 boys) with an average chronological age of 4,9 years who attended kindergarten only a few months, who come from childcare institutions and were taken over by families for care for several months, from families in which there are strained relations, without concern for the education of children, from disorganized families (the child being entrusted to the mother after her second marriage) where there are kids from previous marriages.

5. Research Methods

Via anamnesis/background checks, the examination of the subjects personal records, and general conversation with their parents, information regarding the socio-affective environment of the households from whom the children were born was gathered.

The investigation of the psychological age of the language was carried out by means of the adapted a test which is applicable to children aged 3 to 7 years old and which includes seven subtests accompanied by clear instruction and demonstration materials (real objects or images) that allow the finding of deviations in language development in relation to chronological age. The child has to distinguish the opposite properties of real objects or images, to fill in the gaps in a spoken text, to repeat strings of numbers, to know what a series of objects are made of, to understand the meaning and to find the opposite of some terms (antonyms), to name and differentiate the colours, to explain the meaning of the verb-action mimicked by the experimenter. The calculation of the psychological age of the language was obtained according to the cumulative score in each of the 7 tests, according to the scale, add the 7 ages of the language, divide their sum by 7 and obtain the psychological age of the child's language, which may (or may not) correspond to the chronological age.

The psychological test for investigating vocabulary volume included a list of 12 common words - house, bread, school, sidewalk, ball, cat, coat, drapery, doll, pigeon, apple, lake. Subjects were tasked with defining what they meant by that word ("What do you mean by dog? What is a dog?"). According to the scale for 10 correctly defined words 3 points are awarded, for 8 words 2 points are awarded, and for 6 words 1 point is awarded (Clinciu, 2005).

6. Findings

The results of the two subject groups were compared, allowing us to see how the children in the two groups who did not have access to the same socio-cultural and educational circumstances differed in their level of language and communication development.

The average score (Table 1) obtained by the subjects from the two groups of subjects in the 7 tests of the test knowledge of the psychological age of language highlighted the following: the greatest

difficulties were recorded in the tests contrary without objects and images, knowledge of 6 materials, filling in gaps in a spoken text. While the subjects in group A responded quickly to the tasks, the subjects in group B encountered difficulties in filling in the gaps in the text, they did not find the right word, they used simplistic ways of answering. In the, Numbers Repeat'' and ,10 Colour Name'' tests, subjects from both groups were able to easily obtain relatively close scores.

Table 1. Average of the two group's scores on the Psychological age of the language knowledge

Sample	Media lot A	Media lot B	Column Heading
Opposites (with objects and images)	5,73	5,06	6
Gap	5,0	3,06	4
Numbers	5,56	5,33	4
Materials	4,16	2,35	5
Opposites (without objects and images)	4,25	2,35	6
Colors	6,25	6,06	4
Verbs	5,45	3,63	8

We note that difficulties were reported in meeting the requirements of the tests in the subjects in group A as well, but the promptness of the answers, the diversity of the lexicon, the accuracy of using the right word is superior to that of the subjects in group B.

When it comes to comparing the average scores of the subjects from the two groups with the test scale, it can be seen that group B subjects scored lower than the scale indicated value on 5 of the 7 parts of the test. Results superior to those in the scale were obtained by the subjects from the two groups in the tests „Repetition of numbers'' (Numbers) and „Name of 10 colours'' (Colours).

The subjects from group A obtained a score below the one indicated in the scale in 4 out of 7 tests of the set of tests, but the gap between the score in the scale and the real result is small.

Statistical processing by the T-Student method attests to the existence of a statistically significant difference in all test samples between the researched groups: Knowledge of 6 subjects ($t = 11.14$; $p = 0.001$); Opposites without objects and images ($t = 7.23$; $p = 0.001$); Filling in the gaps in a spoken text ($t = 42.52$; $p = 0.001$); Knowing the meaning of verbs ($t = 15.43$; $p = 0.001$); Opposites with objects and images ($t = 10.12$; $p = 0.001$); Repeating numbers ($t = 12.25$; $p = 0.001$); The name of 10 colours ($t = 10.37$; $p = 0.001$).

Only the subjects in group B demonstrate a difference between the psychological age of the language and the chronological age of roughly one year. The psychological age of the language is the same as the chronological age in the group A participants. In terms of the psychological age of language, there were statistically significant variations between the two subject groups. ($t = 20.34$; $p = 0.001$).

The average psychological age of language for group A subjects with 4.8-year chronological ages is 5.5 years. The average psychological age of the language was 0.2 years younger than the average chronological age in a single test (the name of various materials used to make some products).

The average psychological age of language is 5.5 years for group B subjects, who are 4.9 years old on average. The tests for comparing items or photographs of objects, where the average language age is

0.7 years younger than the average chronological age, and test number 4, where the average language age is 0.4 years younger than the average chronological age, had the worst results.

According to these results it can be said that the average psychological age of the language of group A is higher than the chronological age with a difference of 0.7 years compared to group B where the difference is less than only 0.5 years. This shows us that the educational environment provided by the family and the kindergarten to the children contributes to the development of the children's communication and language. By going through the instructive-educational language education activities from the small group attended by the children of group A, it was possible to obtain very good results in terms of the level of communication and language development.

Regarding the second hypothesis by which we assumed that there are significant differences in the volume of preschool vocabulary depending on the educational environment offered by families, we found that the vocabulary test used showed that the average results of the subjects in the group B ($M = 18$ points), compared to the average of the results of the subjects in group A ($M = 28$ points), is lower, in all words of the test.

The subjects in group A easily explained the words, they even found synonyms when they could not define it, proving that they use them frequently, they showed lightness in expression, the correctness of the grammatical chords. The subjects from group B, with a low level of vocabulary, answered that they did not know, did not want, could not, did not see or they expressed themselves with difficulty, showed lexical insufficiency, agrammatism, showed fatigue, even refused to continue, etc.

Distribution of subjects by vocabulary development levels shows that subjects from disadvantaged educational backgrounds (group B) were placed at a lower level of vocabulary development in lexical terms (no subject was ranked at a higher level, 22.1 % were ranked at an average level, and the rest were ranked at a lower level). The subjects from group A are found on all levels - high level 22.1%, medium level 58, 2%, low level 19.7%.

The statistical processing of the results highlights statistically significant differences in vocabulary development between subjects in the two groups ($t = 13,572$; $p = 0.001$), which confirms the hypothesis that lexically between subjects from different socio-cultural backgrounds there are significant differences. Insufficient development of the lexical aspect of the language has consequences on communication and implicitly on school success.

7. Conclusions

The examination of the kids sociocultural origins provides additional support for the group A kids' higher test scores. These kids come from solid homes with pleasant relationships, as I have indicated. The fact that the children in group B come from seemingly stable households with broken relationships or from single-parent households helps to explain their worse performance. Preschoolers behavior and outward expressions in connections with adults and classmates their own age are significantly influenced by these relationships inside the children's homes.

An early education in communication and language is required because of the significance of language and communication in the formation and development of a child's personality, in enhancing his capacity to interact with other children and adults, to interact with the environment, to know and master it

through explorations, tests, exercises, and experiments, in the discovery by each child of his own identity, and in the acquisition of the skills of learning..

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