CHAPTER 1

An Introduction to Language and Learning

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CASE STUDY: The role of language in the classroom

Kimberly, a first-grader in her first few weeks of school, was unable to answer questions about stories read aloud to the class. She appeared distracted during story time, and she fidgeted and played with her hands. Ms. Benjamin, the classroom teacher, decided that she had to make careful observations to informally assess the nature of Kimberly's inability to answer questions about a story read aloud to the class. The goal was to determine if Kimberly's behavior suggested developmental immaturity, inattention, impulsivity, or distractibility suggestive of an attention disorder or if she seemed to have problems understanding words, sentences, or stories read to the class, which would be suggestive of a language disorder. The teacher knew that Kimberly was a native English speaker and eliminated learning a new language as a factor in her inability to answer questions about stories. Consequently, the teacher planned to use her observations of Kimberly to create a more descriptive profile of how this child was performing. Such data can be very useful in making recommendations to the Child Study Team should a formal request for evaluation need to be made.

What might the classroom teacher do to help Kimberly respond to questions about stories read to the class? On what information and experience did you base your answer?

INTRODUCTION

Several factors play a role in children's academic success. Among them are good health, emotional well-being, and intact learning abilities (Hadley, Simmerman, Long, & Luna, 2000). In

spite of the importance of all these factors, kindergarten teachers overwhelmingly report that language deficiencies are the most acute problems affecting children's school readiness (Boyer, 1991). Correspondingly, one of the major health problems reported for preschool-age children is language delay (Rescorla, 1989). The case described at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the importance of understanding how spoken language capability is vital for the development of literacy skills. For example, children must be able to attend to and understand spoken language in order to develop the skills needed in all academic areas.

New Language Rules

Within the classroom, children are exposed to new rules for using language. They must now understand the social rules for interacting with teachers and peers and must also learn to listen carefully to directions and information that relate to learning. Understanding the components of language and their impact on the academic and social functioning of students is key for classroom teachers.

Within the classroom, children are exposed to new vocabulary and rules for using language, along with learning to listen carefully to directions and information.

Observation and Intervention

Not only is spoken language the primary means of communication in the classroom, but teachers are in an optimal position to observe students' language development and level of function. In the modern classroom, a teacher must determine whether observed problems

are a function of learning English as a second language; a function of a learning/behavioral challenge requiring other professionals trained to deal in these areas; or a symptom of a language disorder that requires referral, evaluation, and intervention by a speech-language pathologist. The first step for the classroom teacher is to make careful observations of the child's language or behavioral issues to understand the nature of the problem but not to affix a label to it. Once such an analysis takes place, the teacher can determine what she or he can do to address the performance or behavioral concerns and monitor how the child responds to these interventions. This process of observation and classroom-based intervention provides important data for the Child Study Team should a more formal evaluation need to be conducted relative to a child's communication development.

Chapter Concepts

To help the classroom teacher begin to understand what she or he should be monitoring regarding communication and language, the following concepts are discussed in this chapter:

- *Communication:* the exchange of information, ideas, and concepts

- *Speech:* a mechanical process involving a coordinated effort involving breathing and movement of the tongue, lips, and jaw to produce sounds

- *Language:* conveying meaning through words, signs, or written forms

- *Reading:* the process of understanding the meaning of characters/letters and words in written material

- *Writing:* the mechanical act of forming characters/letters to create meaning

- *Executive functions:* the cognitive functions that involve planning, organization, memory, and monitoring work for accuracy

- *Critical thinking:* the cognitive function that allows determining the meaning and significance of something that has been observed or read

THE COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION: SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, needs, and desires (Owens, 2008). The speaker sends information (**encodes**), which the receiver of this information comprehends (**decodes**). We are able to communicate using various modalities: verbal, written, gesture, pantomime, drawing, or sign language. For verbal (spoken) communication, a speaker can convey intent (meaning) through words, sentences, or longer utterances, such as conversation or narrative (storytelling). Communication depends on speech and language.

Speech

Speech is the verbal production of meaningful sounds. The speech process involves movements of the articulators (e.g., lips, tongue, and jaw) and coordination of the muscles

that move these articulators to produce sounds. (A complete description of speech skills is provided in Chapter 5.) The most important aspect of speech is that movement of the articulators results in the production of sounds that compose the language we hear—speech is the movement and language is the concepts or ideas that are expressed.

Language

Language consists of a socially shared code or conventions (set of rules) for representing **concepts** (beliefs, thoughts, and ideas) through the use of arbitrary symbols (words) as well as rule-governed combinations of those symbols in sentences (syntax). For every language in the world, there is a socially shared code that a speaker uses to represent meaning through beliefs (e.g., "I think she is coming soon"); thoughts (e.g., "I think that´s a great plan"); ideas (e.g., "Let's try to find a new way to get there"); space and time (e.g., *in front of* and *later*); and a description of things, people, and events in the environment (e.g., *objects, parties,* and *parades*). We would be unable to understand one another if this code were not shared.

As noted earlier, language involves the combination of words to form sentences (syntax). English syntax rules allow for the word order subject + verb + object (e.g., *Jane drank milk*). Other languages may use other orders, such as subject + object + verb (SOV), verb + subject + object (VSO), verb + object + subject (VOS), object + subject + verb (OSV), and object + verb + subject (OVS). This is one of the most interesting aspects of language: different rules for different language.

The importance of language in the classroom is described in the following section of this chapter and the chapters that follow in this book.

LANGUAGE AND THE CLASSROOM

The following language components are essential in children's academic development (Secord, 2002; Sotto & Prendeville, 2007): receptive language (understanding), spoken language (expression), literacy (reading and writing), social communication, and speech and phonological skills. Descriptions of these language components follow, along with examples of a child's performance in each of these components. Other essential factors for classroom success are the cognitive components, which include executive functioning and critical thinking. We begin with a discussion of receptive language, defined as the ability to understand spoken language.

Receptive Language

Receptive language consists of a child's listening skills. In the classroom, these skills involve understanding a classroom teacher's directions, instructions, and explanations. In addition, good receptive language skills allow a child to understand words, sentences, stories, and directions. Intact language requires that children understand directions that are short (e.g., "Open your books and read the first page") or long (e.g., "Get your coats, pack up your backpacks, line up at the door, and report to the gym teacher"). In the first case, children must remember two pieces of information and in the second, four. Children with receptive language difficulties frequently forget the earlier portion of directions, especially when lengthy or containing multiple steps.

Receptive language skills allow a child to understand words, sentences, stories, and directions.

Receptive language also allows a child to remember details from stories read in class by the teacher, especially in preschool and in earlier grades. These details may contain events or vocabulary items that contribute to language development and literacy. Children´s inability to respond to questions about these stories in the earlier grades allows early identification of potential language difficulties. The following vignette illustrates difficulty with lengthy directions.

> Jonas was able to remember certain spoken directions (e.g., "Open your blue notebooks and find last week´s vocabulary words") but had difficulty with others (e.g., "Open your blue notebooks, find last week´s vocabulary words, and underline the words that were in the story we just read"). Note that the second example contains three pieces of information that must be remembered and understood in a particular sequence. His teacher noticed the problem and decided to express directions in shorter chunks of information. Each direction was given and followed by a pause (e.g., "Open your notebooks . . . pause . . .").

Sounds in words last only briefly after being spoken. It is in this brief time that the listener must make sense of the spoken message, analyze it, and figure out the speaker's meaning. Some children are unable to accomplish this rapid processing of the spoken signal and require additional support for their receptive language problems.

Receptive Language Problems and Solutions

Two behaviors may alert the classroom teacher to the presence of receptive language difficulties: missing longer directions and frequently asking for repetition. Children's receptive language abilities are supported when directions are shorter and repeated or when they are asked to repeat the directions to make sure they are understood. Good teaching practices should incorporate repetition of directions or asking students to recap directions to help teach listening skills. Both strategies are essential to academic success for all learners. For older children, tape recording and writing directions for homework assignments may be effective. Additional supports within the classroom are pictures on the wall to illustrate the topic at hand. These supports benefit all children within the class, not just those with receptive language difficulties.

There are also cases when children do not respond to questions because of expressive language difficulties. They understand the question but may not have the vocabulary or the knowledge to structure sentences to respond. To understand this component of language, we next examine expressive language.

Expressive Language

Expressive language consists of the ability to express ideas and needs in a meaningful manner that is understood by listeners. An essential factor in expression is the ability to convey meaning (semantics) in a manner that is understood by listeners. Another factor is the ability to sequence words in the correct order to produce sentences (syntax) and longer utterances (conversations and stories about events). Communicative interaction with others requires that a speaker express language according to certain rules (pragmatics) such as maintaining a topic or taking turns as a speaker or a listener.

Expressive Language Problems

Expressive language problems may be revealed when children cannot find the word they want to say (e.g., "It's that thing, you know") or genuinely have difficulty learning new vocabulary items. In essence, expressive language skills are illustrated by the fluent flow of ideas or concepts in a manner that is easily understood. The following vignette illustrates difficulty with this component of language. In this example, the child has difficulty expressing her ideas in a clear manner, often using fillers or empty words when responding to questions or retelling events.

It was difficult to understand what Erin wanted to say. Fillers interrupted her fluency (e.g., "and then," "uh . . . uh . . . uh . . ."), and empty words (e.g., "that thing") lacked meaningful reference. Her sentences were shorter and less complex than those of her classmates. Her classroom teacher noticed this problem and decided to provide props in the classroom to help her retrieve certain words. For example, pictures were placed around the room to illustrate the topic under discussion. She also asked children to draw a picture illustrating aspects of the topic at hand, thinking that this would provide rehearsal for vocabulary elements to be discussed in class. In this case, children were given the opportunity to talk about the picture they had drawn. The classroom teacher also sent home vocabulary word lists for all children to give them additional practice for

words in current use in the class. The teacher made sure that vocabulary words were taught in context and not in isolation. Teaching words in context helps students remember these vocabulary items.

Expressive Language Solutions

Children with expressive language difficulties are helped when given the type of supports described above. Additional support can be supplied through intervention by a speech-language pathologist, working closely with the teacher to support academic activities in the classroom. A caution here is that teachers need to be aware of various cultural practices involving student interaction with adults. Expressive language skills are frequently a means of identifying children with language difficulties. However, some children who are learning English as a second language go through a period of silence because they are not comfortable or willing to take risks producing words or sentences in learning a new language. (This behavior is discussed in detail in Chapter 13, and additional information on second-language learning is provided in Chapter 14.)

One of the ways that expressive or oral language skills can be stimulated and taught in the classroom is through modeling. For example, the classroom teacher can talk about his or her actions when completing a task, and students can be asked to verbalize their actions. In this way, expressive language begins with a simple description of current activities. Another activity is to have students ask questions. These questions can be about an upcoming event or just something hidden in a box (e.g., "Is it round?" "Can you eat it?" "Is it alive?").

Another expressive language activity focuses on asking how things are different or what characteristics distinguish one thing from another when children are presented with two similar objects that differ in size, shape, or color. Other tasks consist of asking children to describe the scene of a story or object function (e.g., "How do we use a . . . ?"). More advanced tasks elicit expressive language by asking children questions like "What might happen next?" and "What would happen if . . . ?" It may be important to introduce the vocabulary needed to engage in the expressive language task before beginning. In summary, children talk more when they feel comfortable and when they are engaged and interested. Children who appear to have more significant difficulties may benefit from referral for additional help.

READING

Another component of language in the classroom is reading, an essential factor in academic success. The classroom teacher must keep in mind that reading depends on the earlier development of receptive and expressive language skills and that reading requires more than mere exposure to books. This exposure is essential but does not fulfill all the requirements for reading development, which begin well before children enter school.

The Foundations of Reading Skills

Emergent literacy skills are the early prereading abilities that support later literacy skills: holding a book and "pretending to read" at 2 to 3 years of age, understanding that words on the page have meaning, and understanding the connection between letters on the page

and sounds that are heard. Later literacy skills consist of the ability to identify words and comprehend (understand) written materials appropriate to age and academic grade.

One of the skills essential to succeeding in reading is the ability to decode (to interpret print), especially when faced with new words. For example, in later grades, children may encounter a novel word. In this case, they use context or try to sound out the word, depending on their earlier acquisition of the correspondence of sounds with letters.

Reading Problems and Solutions

One of the signs of potential reading difficulties materializes when children avoid reading tasks.

> Rory didn't seem to enjoy reading time as much as his peers during independent reading time or when stories were read to the first-grade class. He preferred looking at books with pictures instead of books with words. He also chose the same books for reading each time, and even when a new book was added to his desk, he never opened it. The teacher noticed his lack of interest in reading materials. She decided to send books home and asked his family to engage in nightly story reading. Her goal was to familiarize Rory with the story that would be introduced to the class the following day. She thought that this might contribute to his engagement in reading tasks and his degree of comfort when asked questions about the reading materials.

In the classroom, before a book is read (to the class in younger grades or by the class in older grades), vocabulary items from the story can be placed on the board (pictures and words for younger children and words for older children). These words can be discussed even before the book is read. During the reading task, the teacher can ask questions that require responses (e.g., "Why do you think . . . ?"). After the story has been read, the teacher can ask students questions that target the children's ideas about the story (e.g., "What did you like/not like about . . . ?"). Children's interest in reading may also be developed when books are sent home to be read with family members and later read in class. Familiarity with the stories encourages children's participation when the teacher reads books or asks questions about the material. Asking children to "act out" stories is another way to encourage interest in reading. If a genuine reading problem is suspected, referral is essential to provide the early supports that will allow a child to develop good reading skills. In the case of genuine reading problems, it is appropriate to refer for specialized instruction.

WRITING

Another important language component in the classroom is writing, and reading and writing are two language skills that are closely connected. In fact, children need to learn that written text is simply someone's verbalization that was written down, and linking oral speech to written text is an important understanding. In addition, both reading and writing skills emerge from children's receptive and expressive language abilities. (See Chapters 7 and 8 for a deeper discussion of the precursors of reading skills.)

The Foundations of Writing Skills

Similar to the development of reading, emergent literacy skills later reinforce intact writing abilities. These emergent skills begin with toddlers' drawing and scribbling as they pretend to write. A broader discussion of these emergent skills can be found in Chapter 8. The language skills essential for good writing are semantics, the ability to express ideas and needs in written form; syntax, the ability to create well-formed sentences in written texts; and mechanics and organization, the ability to follow rules for letter formation, information organization, and structure. It is in grades one through three that literacy is introduced. Within the first-grade class, children will have varying levels of writing (and reading) skills. Some will need special guidance, while others can be helped with classroom strategies that enhance their skills. The following vignette describes good writing skills in the first grade.

> Emily's writing was similar to that of other children in the first-grade class. Her sentences were short, and she sometimes used a combination of writing and drawing. She was able to write at least three sentences when asked to describe something that happened to her over the weekend. Her teacher noticed that other children had more difficulty expressing themselves through writing. She decided to initiate a strategy to engage children's interest in writing. She gave children an assignment to write/draw a story about a recent trip the class made to the science museum. She knew that, in the first grade, children should be given plentiful practice in using writing and drawing to express their ideas and concepts about the world. She also knew that some children would need additional tutoring to develop good writing skills.

SPEECH AND PHONOLOGICAL SKILLS

We next discuss speech and phonological skills: the vehicles for verbally expressing ideas and concepts derived from language. Both speech and phonological skills allow a child to be intelligible (understandable). Speech is the ability to produce sounds with accuracy, while phonology involves the ability to sequence sounds to produce words and longer utterances. Children with speech difficulties frequently have difficulty with certain sounds—generally *s*, *l*, or *r* sounds. Those with phonological difficulties have problems combining sounds or syllables in words. In this case, productions may consist of "wed" for *red* or "teep" for *keep.*

> Sabrina has problems with speech, such as correctly producing some consonant sounds—for example, /s/ (see), /r/ (red), and /l/ (low). She also has some problems with phonology rules, producing "nana" for *banana* and "raef" for *giraffe.* At times, the kindergarten classroom teacher and Sabrina's peers cannot understand her speech.

Speech sound difficulties and phonological difficulties are typical for younger children but should be resolved by about 4 years of age. It is appropriate to refer children for speech-language pathology intervention if problems persist.

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

The ability to follow social interaction rules for conversation and interaction allows children to interact with peers and with adults in conversation. These rules consist of eye contact, taking turns as speaker and listener, and maintaining the topic at hand. Children with social interaction difficulties often require support and training to improve the frequency and quality of their social interactions.

> Otis joined other children while they were engaged in a game. He enjoyed playing with the other children and had a number of friends in the classroom. On the other hand, Danny hung back, watching other children but seeming unsure how to enter an existing playgroup.

The Supports for Social Communication

Children with social communication difficulties can improve their interactions through observing appropriate models interacting with other children. The classroom teacher can ask children to role-play "wanting to play with another child" or "asking another child to play with you." The classroom can also be organized to encourage more interaction (a model for this goal is described in Chapter 3). Some of the strategies that target social communication include grouping children with more and less advanced social skills to provide models. Another method is to have children explain something to each other, again pairing children of unequal skill levels. Social communication difficulties can also be addressed through reading stories about children with these same difficulties and examining with the class how these difficulties are resolved in the story. Having students discuss these kinds of social problems can be a good way of increasing student awareness, especially for those students who do not experience these problems, and thereby sensitizing them to what they can do to help another student.

COGNITIVE COMPONENTS: EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS AND CRITICAL THINKING

We follow the discussion of social communication with a discussion of the cognitive components that play a role in the classroom. These components involve the ability to understand, plan, organize, and process information. It is clear that these are essential factors in academic success. Executive functions and critical thinking are based on children's cognitive abilities. Cognitive abilities provide the ability to acquire knowledge and understand and process incoming and outgoing information.

Executive Functions

Executive functions consist of organization, initiation, planning, organization, problem solving, making changes when necessary, and/or implementing a task. Functions also consist of attention, the ability to attend to the task at hand; memory, the ability to remember spoken information; and self-regulation, the ability to stay focused on the task at hand and monitor output for accuracy. The following vignette presents an example of an executive function disorder.

> The teacher asked children in the class to complete three worksheets that involved cutting and pasting pictures and then matching them to words. The children promptly began working, first cutting out all the pictures. One of the children began a few minutes later, cutting only one picture out without pasting it or drawing a line to match it to a word. This child seemed to have no plan about how to proceed and was not able to self-monitor or know that he or she wasn't doing what the other children were doing. The teacher needed to intervene, focusing the child on the steps of the task and helping develop a plan for how to complete the assignment.

The question the teacher needs to consider is whether this behavior indicates planning problem or whether the student has difficulty recalling the directions. Determining which possibility is actually impacting the behavior can provide important insight into follow-up activities and supports. Frequently, children with executive function difficulties show poor organization, losing books and other classroom tools, and lack the ability to recognize or correct errors in work. (Additional examples of executive difficulties are presented in Chapter 6, along with classroom strategies.)

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking involves the ability to identify and gather important information, evaluate output to determine if the work is accurate, and problem-solve. The following vignette presents an example of a child who hasn't learned how to think critically about a problem.

> After reading a story to the class, the teacher asked each student to offer a solution to a problem faced by one of the characters in the story. One of the children could not come up with a solution and seemed surprised by some of the answers the other students in the class offered.

This child cannot identify the information necessary to solve a problem or propose a solution and evaluate the quality of that solution, even though he or she may have intact basic language abilities. It may be necessary to model various solutions to problems to develop critical thinking skills. In this case, all children can be involved in the process, but some time should be devoted to working with a child alone.

STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Language Development Across Grades

The role of the classroom teacher is to provide children with supports for their language development when needed and provide a nurturing environment for learning. Language supports for younger children are more readily available, given that early grades have pictures on the wall that portray classroom themes along with a number of other environmental supports that provide children with language cues (Bernstein & Levey, 2009). Pictures frequently act to remind children of words that they may not otherwise be able to produce from memory.

Later grades lack these environmental cues or supports, with children required to rely more on their internal language skills. In addition, classroom tasks become more complex as children encounter expository reading materials that require intact and age-appropriate language skills along with developed schemas, attention, and memory. Students also need to learn how to derive meaning from new words embedded in sentences, using context (the surrounding words) to provide the meaning of the unknown word. For students in later grades, "learning to read" is not the focus; the focus becomes "reading to learn," as concepts in science and history are presented in texts. Consequently, it is essential that classroom teachers become aware of the role that they can play in language development, in early as well as later grades.

Reading Skills

Frequently, young children are introduced to books for the first time in the classroom. Many classroom teachers are aware of the importance of print recognition as an early precursor to reading development. Children must also learn to associate the sounds they hear with the alphabet letters on the page to help them decode (interpret) words. Later reading skills require that children use their early knowledge of sound-letter association to identify unknown words in texts. Language also plays a role in mathematics, with children acquiring knowledge of the vocabulary associated with math problems (e.g., *more than, less than, dividend, multiplier*), along with the spatial terms associated with later mathematics tasks (e.g., *above, below, perpendicular, adjacent*). In addition, using words such as *because* helps them understand the connection between concepts (e.g., "He was mad because the dog stole his catcher's mitt").

Listening Skills

Teachers across all grades must continuously work to develop and maintain listening skills with respect to the teacher and peers. To ensure that listening skills are functioning optimally, students can be encouraged to repeat information. They can also be asked to elaborate on another child's productions, adding information of their own. The following strategies can help promote language learning in the classroom and support children's learning in the presence of potential language difficulties (Quale, Peters, & Matkins, 2010).

- Seat children so that all can see the classroom teacher's face.

- Monitor children's attention and pause until attention is focused on the task at hand.

- Pause to highlight important information and to capture children's attention.

- Allow children to express ideas versus lecturing or only asking them questions.

- Encourage children to ask questions and explain what is not clearly understood.

- Monitor background noise, such as noise from computers and other distractions, to enhance listening.

- Ask questions and ask children to repeat information to ensure that materials or information have been understood.

Connecting Language to Environment

Finally, the most important aspect of language and the classroom is that *language* needs to be related to the environment. Visual supports are necessary to relate spoken language to concrete examples for younger children. For both younger and older students, classroom language strategies can include reading, writing, drawing pictures, role play, and discussion to enhance learning concepts. Communication through language is the means by which the classroom teacher can identify children who may have language difficulties (Peets, 2009).

Visual supports help children associate spoken language with classroom tasks.

Additional classroom strategies in the following chapters provide teachers with methods for developing children´s language skills in the classroom.

We now return to the case study presented at the beginning of the chapter to determine the outcome of the classroom teacher's observations of Kimberly's difficulties in responding to questions about stories read in class.

CASE STUDY REVISITED

The vignette presented earlier in this chapter provided an example of a child experiencing difficulty answering questions when the teacher read books aloud to the class. The teacher planned to observe this child to determine why she could not answer such questions.

Observation of this child in different contexts was essential to determine if her language skills were better in certain situations than others. As you can see, this approach was successful in determining the basis of Kimberly's difficulties when books were read to the class.

CASE STUDY REVISITED: The role of language in the classroom

To determine if there was a problem with attention or focus, the teacher read a story to Kimberly in a one-to-one situation. The goal was to determine if being in a larger group setting with other children led to distraction. In the smaller group setting, she found that Kimberly was able to answer more questions about the story but still had problems providing details from the reading task. However, given leading questions (e.g., "But what happened after the little girl met the old woman on the path?"), she was able to retrieve this information. Consequently, her teacher determined that Kimberly understood the story but required help to retrieve certain details.

To improve her performance in the classroom, the teacher sent books to the child's parents each night, choosing books that she planned to read in class the next day. Kimberly's parents were encouraged to read the stories to her and discuss the events in the story. The goal was to provide Kimberly with familiarity with the story to enhance her success answering questions in the group-reading context, along with potentially improving her self-esteem. Over the next few weeks, Kimberly's performance became more consistent with that of her peers, even when the teacher introduced new books not read at home. Subsequently, she showed more engagement, less fidgeting, and provided more appropriate responses to questions. She also showed more interest in reading new books and less interest in picture books.

SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the basic components of language that are discussed in depth in the following chapters. Given that kindergarten teachers have reported that language difficulties are the main obstacle affecting children's school readiness, language is the focus of this chapter and this text. Language is the vehicle for communication within the classroom, and knowledge of its components allows the classroom teacher to identify children who may have language difficulties that may impact their learning. The basic components discussed in this chapter were:

- Communication as the means for exchanging information;

- Speech as the means for producing the sounds that comprise words;

- Language as the means for representing beliefs, thoughts, and ideas through spoken language;

- Social communication as the means for using language in interaction;

- Executive functions as the means for successful planning and monitoring work in the classroom;

- Critical thinking as the means for grasping important information.

To begin our journey into understanding language development and learning, Chapter 2 provides knowledge of the theories that underlie language development: the environmental theories of Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bates; the innateness theory of Chomsky; the emergentism theory of Bates and MacWhinney; and the Theory of Mind of Baron-Cohen and others. Chapter 2 also offers strategies to enhance language development related to these theories. As you prepare to move forward in this text, pay close attention to the role of the classroom teacher in facilitating language development.

KEY WORDS

Communication	Encode	Receptive language
Concepts	Expressive language	Speech
Decode	Language	

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain the importance of decoding in the development of literacy.

2. Describe executive functions. Explain the importance of executive function difficulties in the classroom.

3. Explain the reason why the classroom teacher in the case study needed to observe Kimberly's responses to questions in other contexts.

4. Explain why empty words indicate a language disorder.

5. Describe the language disorders that would be associated with receptive language and with expressive language. How do these disorders differ?

PROJECTS

1. Observe a classroom. Make notes on how the classroom teacher interacts with the children in the class. Are there any children with speech or language difficulties? If so, make notes on how the classroom interacts with these children versus children with typical speech and language abilities.

2. Observe the interactions of children at play. Are there any children with speech difficulties? How do the other children interact with this child? Make notes on any differences between their interactions with this child and their interactions among themselves.

3. Choose five journal articles from this chapter's references. After reading your choices, write an article that compares these articles in the following manner: the main research project, the number and age of the participants, and results. In your article, describe how you would use the information you gained in your classroom.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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