

# Understanding Child Language Development Patterns Based on Developmental Psychology and Psycholinguistics Approaches

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Submitted 02-11-2024 Accepted 13-12-2024 Published 30-12-2024	Education is more than just teaching—it involves helping students understand and develop character, honing their innate potential in the learning process. This paper aims to provide teachers with insights on how to understand child development through developmental psychology and child psycholinguistics approaches. Teachers can create a more effective and supportive learning environment by understanding cognitive, emotional, and language development stages. The developmental psychology approach helps teachers recognize the emotional and social needs of children, allowing them to offer appropriate support at each stage of development. Meanwhile, child psycholinguistics enables teachers to understand how children acquire and develop language abilities, thus helping them create more appropriate and effective teaching methods. By integrating these two approaches, teachers can better design curricula and teaching strategies that suit the developmental needs of each child. This not only enhances teaching effectiveness but also helps children fully develop their potential holistically, covering cognitive, emotional, social, and linguistic aspects. A deep understanding of developmental psychology and child psycholinguistics equips teachers with the necessary tools to support each student's educational journey, making education a more meaningful experience and building the character and skills needed for their future.
<b>Keywords:</b> Language Development; Developmental Psychology, Psycholinguistics	
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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Ki Hajar Dewantara defines education as the process of guiding individuals toward maximum safety and happiness as human beings and community members—humanizing individuals by respecting their basic human rights and supporting their development toward maturity with critical thinking and good morals (Pristiwanti et al., 2022, p. 7911). Education is a planned learning activity passed down through teaching, transforming individuals from ignorance to knowledge, whether formally or informally (Azzahra & Irawan, 2023, p. 13; Assa et al., 2022, p. 1)—a conscious effort to pass on culture between generations through the learning process, developing the spiritual, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by learners (Rahman et al., 2022, p. 1). From these explanations of education, it can be concluded that education involves interaction between educators and learners in a learning environment, focusing on the development of students' potential, skills, and learning behaviors that are essential in educational psychology.

Psychology is the study of mental phenomena, and teachers must understand that each child has differences in innate abilities, physical maturity, intelligence, and motor skills. In an educational context, psychological knowledge about children is crucial for educators wherever they teach. Educational psychology is a branch of psychology that examines individual behavior to discover facts, generalizations, and theories related to education to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. This field also studies the interaction between students and their potential as well as their environment, helping them understand their strengths, weaknesses, and limitations (Ekaningtyas, 2022, p. 34). Therefore, it is important for an educator to thoroughly understand the psychological characteristics of their students. This ability allows them to assess whether children are learning well or not and measure their ability to absorb the material.

Understanding and following the development patterns of students enables educators to understand their growth and learning progress, helping to enhance learning abilities according to each child's innate potential. Early childhood developmental psychology specifically studies children's mental, physical, cognitive, linguistic, moral, and socio-emotional development (Sukatin et al., 2023, p. 186). Psychology finds its place in education because it relates to all aspects of educational material, requiring psychological analysis for educators to select the most suitable methods for their students, considering their age and class level.

#### **METHODS**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to understand children's language development patterns based on developmental psychology and psycholinguistic theories. Data were collected through a literature review, referencing various relevant sources, including books, journals, and previous research findings. Analysis was conducted by identifying, organizing, and interpreting information related to language development stages and examining how cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of children influence this process. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between developmental theories and educational practices.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Educational psychology, as a branch of psychology, examines human behavior within the educational process, focusing primarily on understanding learner psychology to ensure effective education that meets individual needs. While it also addresses teacher psychology and educational organizations, its core lies in exploring how learners develop and respond within educational environments (Ekaningtyas, 2022, p. 34). The primary goal of educational psychology is to enhance educational effectiveness by considering learners' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development, ultimately producing well-rounded graduates. Its benefits include adapting teaching methods to learners' needs, fostering appropriate parenting awareness, and understanding individual developmental processes (Ekaningtyas, 2022, p. 35). By applying educational psychology, educators create environments conducive to holistic student growth, striking a balance between intellectual and psychological development. This approach aims to nurture future generations who are creative, intelligent, independent, and possess strong moral character (Ekaningtyas, 2022, p. 36).

#### **Developmental Psychology**

Developmental psychology is a branch of psychology that examines changes in behavior and the developmental processes of individuals from the time of conception (prenatal) to the end of life. In developmental psychology from a Qur'anic perspective, death does not limit the study of human behavior; even after life, humans can still be understood in their journey. Educational psychology is an important discipline for developing human potential through learning and education, where human development encompasses physical, behavioral, and characteristic changes that occur progressively and continue throughout life (Nurkhasyanah, 2020, p. 2). This development is not merely physical growth but is a complex integration of many structures and functions that affect a person's subsequent life. The developmental aspects of children, including language, physical-motor, emotional, and others, form an integrated unity that underlies the complexity of personality development (Nasution et al., 2024, p. 119).

There are three common theories and approaches in developmental studies: the stagebased approach, differential approach, and ipsative approach. The stage-based approach is the most widely applied because individuals undergo development through a series of stages, each with specific characteristics. This approach includes two models: (1) general and (2) specific. In general, the stages of human development according to Crijns (Pidarta, 2000, p. 186) are as follows:

- 1. Infancy (0-2 years): A phase where babies spend their time sleeping, seeing, hearing, crawling, and beginning to speak.
- 2. Early childhood (2-4 years): Children begin to learn to walk, name objects, and go through an egocentric phase where they believe that everything around them exists for their own benefit.
- 3. Fairy-tale phase (5-8 years): Children begin to recognize themselves as individuals with more constructive play, although their perceptions are still influenced by their own subjective views.
- 4. Robinson Crusoe phase (9-13 years): A period where critical thinking, interests, and talents start to develop, along with a tendency to inquire and investigate more deeply.
- 5. First puberty (13 years): Children begin to experience significant emotional changes, including a tendency to withdraw, feel restless, and express emotions such as anger and sadness.
- 6. Puberty (14-18 years): A stage where they begin to become aware of personal responsibilities and develop their own life goals.
- 7. Adolescence (19-21 years): A period where they achieve balance and have specific life plans with values they have established, although they are still learning and may sometimes hold radical views on politics, religion, and other issues.

8. Adulthood (21 years and older): A phase where they begin to understand the complexities of adult life and start to act more cautiously.

These stages of development generally encompass various phases that may vary from standard development. Studies show that girls tend to develop three years faster than boys, making girls often appear more mature compared to boys of the same age. Jean Piaget, in his stage-based approach to cognitive development, divided it into four main stages (Yusuf, 2012, p. 3):

- 1. Sensorimotor stage (0-2 years): Children rely on reflexive movements and direct sensory stimuli, and they begin to recognize and name specific objects.
- 2. Preoperational stage (2-6 years): Language development is rapid, with the use of symbols to cognitively represent the world. However, decision-making is still influenced by intuition and tends to be based on limited information, lacking full rational analysis.
- 3. Concrete operational stage (6-11 years): Children begin to think logically, systematically, and solve concrete problems such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.
- 4. Formal operational stage (11 years-adulthood): This is the phase of higher mental operations where children can think logically about both concrete and abstract problems, and they are able to formulate ideas and realistic future plans.

Lawrence Kohlberg (Pidarta, 2000, p. 193) categorized cognitive moral development into three levels, with each level containing two stages:

- 1. Preconventional level
  - a. Obedience and punishment orientation, where right and wrong are determined by the consequences (punishments) received.
  - b. Naive self-interest orientation, where actions considered right are those that fulfill one's own needs.
- 2. Conventional level
  - a. Good child orientation, where good behavior is judged based on the approval of others.
  - b. Law and social order orientation, where correct behavior aligns with the expectations of family, group, or nation.
- 3. Postconventional level
  - a. Social contract orientation, where the right action follows societal standards and helps form new rules.
  - b. Universal ethical principle orientation, where the right action respects principles of justice and universal truths.

Erikson developed the theory of affective development into eight stages as follows:

1. Trust vs Mistrust (ages 0-1 year)

A baby who receives loving care and whose needs are met will develop a sense of trust toward the people around them. Conversely, if the baby's needs are not properly met, they may develop a sense of mistrust toward their environment. This experience influences the following stages of development.

2. Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt (ages 1-3 years)

A child feels autonomy and pride when they are able to perform physical activities such as walking, climbing, and opening things. However, if parents are overly protective or hinder the child's initiatives, the child may develop feelings of shame and doubt about their abilities. 3. Initiative vs Guilt (ages 3-5 years)

Children at this stage take a lot of initiative in daily activities such as playing and talking. If the child is given the opportunity to explore and ask questions, they will develop a sense of initiative. However, if their initiative is restricted or they are made to feel ashamed, they may develop a sense of guilt.

4. Industry vs Inferiority (ages 6-11 years)

At this stage, children begin to show interest in the opposite gender and may experience competition. They learn deductive thinking, play by rules, and enjoy completing tasks. Praise and encouragement from parents or teachers can help them develop a sense of productivity. However, if they are unsuccessful, they may develop feelings of inferiority. 5. Identity vs Role Confusion (ages 12-18 years)

Adolescents at this stage begin to search for and develop their own identity based on past experiences. They start to understand their role as a teenager, a schoolmate, or a member of an organization. They also begin to reflect on their values and expectations. 6. Intimacy vs Isolation (ages 19-25 years)

Adults at this stage learn to build intense relationships and share feelings with others, especially in romantic relationships. Success at this stage depends not only on parental experiences but also on their ability to socially interact with their peers.

7. Generativity vs Stagnation (ages 25-45 years)

Adults at this stage begin to think about their contributions to the next generation and the society in which they live. They engage in considering the education, well-being, and employment of the younger generation. If they do not contribute significantly, they may feel as though they are only pursuing personal pleasures.

8. Integrity vs Despair (ages 45 and older)

At this stage, adults try to achieve a sense of integrity by reflecting on and accepting the life they have lived, including interactions with their children and grandchildren. If they are dissatisfied with their lives, they may experience feelings of despair.

Just as cognitive development helps educators in guiding children's intellectual growth, affective development helps educators nurture children's emotions, and also influences the emotional growth of adults and parents by following these stages.

Based on the points previously outlined, Baller and Charles concluded the following:

- 1. Children from families that provide good care tend to be friendly, flexible, sociable, and easy to get along with;
- 2. Children born into families that reject their presence tend to be problematic, aggressive, defiant towards parents, and difficult to communicate with;
- 3. Children raised in indifferent families tend to be passive and less popular outside the home. The study of developmental psychology, which includes general development in cognition, morals, and affect, provides valuable guidance for educators in applying educational processes. Educators must thoroughly understand these developmental stages to help their

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#### **Child Development**

The term "development" is often associated with growth and maturation, as the three are closely related. Essentially, growth and development are "changes toward higher and better stages." Growth is more related to physical or bodily aspects, indicating quantitative changes or additions, such as increases in size or height. Development, on the other hand, is related to mental or spiritual aspects, focusing on quality, which involves the enhancement and refinement of functions. According to Solicha and Na'imah (2020, p. 197), several aspects influence a child's development, including personality, social morality, language, and religious awareness.

In modern educational concepts, educational experts pay attention to the overall development of a child's personality, including physical, emotional, social, and intellectual aspects. Children are not only evaluated based on intellectual achievement but also comprehensively in all aspects of their personality. Children learn not only with their "heads" but also with their "hearts." Teachers should not see themselves merely as "instructors" delivering lesson material, but also as "educators" striving to develop all of the child's potential to become a complete human being.

Since the main goal of education is to guide so that children's growth and development can proceed naturally and optimally, an educator, according to Ahmadi, must possess knowledge of the basic laws of human psychological development, which are as follows:

- 1. Every child has a unique personality. This uniqueness is shaped by three factors: a. Heredity: Children inherit certain traits from both parents, which form certain potentials. These potentials are difficult to change, even through education and experience. Heredity plays a crucial role in physical growth, mental development, and personality; b. Environment: From the time they are in their mother's womb, humans are influenced by their environment, including the internal, physical, social, cultural, and spiritual environment; c. Self: This factor is often overlooked in understanding child development. It includes feelings, efforts, thoughts, views, judgments, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, which influence daily actions.
- 2. Every child has different levels of intelligence. These differences arise due to variations in personality, intelligence, or other factors. Intelligence is one of the main factors that determine a student's success or failure in learning at school. Students with low or below-average intelligence levels find it difficult to achieve high academic performance. However, there is no guarantee that someone with high intelligence will automatically succeed in school.

Based on existing intelligence tests, Binet categorized levels of intelligence (Intelligence Quotient/IQ) as follows:

- 140 and above: Genius
- 120-139: Very intelligent/superior
- 110-119: Intelligent
- 90-109: Average/normal
- 80-89: Below average/slow learner
- 70-79: Dull/borderline
- 50-69: Feeble-minded/debil/moron
- 30-49: Imbecile
- Below 29: Idiot

According to Howard Gardner, there are eight types of intelligence:

1. Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence: Marked by sensitivity to the meaning and order of words, and the ability to use language to express and understand complex meanings. This intelligence is often found in journalists, linguists, writers, orators, and broadcasters;

- 2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: This type of intelligence is easily measured by evaluating analytical and scientific thinking skills. Scientists, computer programmers, accountants, lawyers, bankers, and mathematicians generally possess this intelligence;
- 3. Visual-Spatial Intelligence: Demonstrated by the ability to create mental images and graphical representations, as well as the ability to think in three dimensions. Architects, painters, sculptors, and designers usually have this intelligence, which is also important for educators in planning and implementing quality learning;
- 4. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence: Related to the ability to connect the mind and body, as seen in dancing, sports, martial arts, and acting. Educators also need this intelligence to present themselves dynamically and not rigidly in front of the class;
- 5. Musical Intelligence: This type of intelligence can increase awareness, reduce stress, and improve brain function through music;
- 6. Interpersonal Intelligence: Necessary for negotiation and providing feedback or evaluation. People with this intelligence have strong intuitive abilities and are skilled at reading the moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions of others. Educators need this intelligence to respond to situations and find appropriate solutions with minimal risk;
- 7. Intrapersonal Intelligence: The ability to understand and articulate the inner workings of one's character and personality. Often referred to as wisdom, this intelligence is essential for educators to accept challenges and resolve conflicts in learning;
- 8. Spiritual Intelligence: Temporary but important for educators to understand that their actions benefit the institution and the learning process.

Each stage of development has unique characteristics. Educators can design educational strategies based on children's abilities. Children's abilities develop as they grow and become distinctive features of their psychological development.

#### **Child Language Development**

Child language development is a complex and crucial process that enables children to quickly understand and use language, from their first words to complex sentences, to communicate thoughts, feelings, and needs (Susanto, 2012). Through the intrauterine environment, the fetus is exposed to human language. Every day, the mother's words are heard and biologically absorbed by the fetus, imprinting those words on the fetus. This is one of the reasons why children tend to be closer to their mothers than to their fathers. A crying child will usually calm down when held by their mother.

Normal children typically acquire their first language in a short time (around the ages of 2-6 years). According to Chomsky, this occurs not only due to the stimuli the child receives, but also because every human is equipped with an innate device from birth that allows them to acquire their first language, known as the "language acquisition device" (LAD). This LAD distinguishes humans from animals and is a unique feature of human language acquisition compared to non-linguistic behaviors of other creatures.

Child language development is influenced not only by neurological development but also by biological development. Lenneberg states that child language development follows a biological schedule that cannot be accelerated or slowed down. A child cannot be forced to say something if their biological ability is not yet adequate. Conversely, if the biological ability is present, the child cannot be prevented from saying it. This demonstrates the connection between biological development and a child's language ability. The goal of preschool language development is for children to be able to process and express words clearly, understand and convey speech, and argue effectively (Lubis, 2018, p. 1).

# **Stages of Child Language Development**

M. Schaerlaekens (Adriana, 2008, p. 117) divides the stages of child language development into four periods, with differences based on certain distinct characteristics in each period. The stages of language development in children, according to Mar'at (2005, p. 61), are as follows:

- a) Prelingual Period (ages 0-1 year) This period is called the prelingual phase because the child is not yet able to articulate spoken language like adults and does not yet follow the rules of language. However, the development of sound production begins a few weeks after birth. The stages of development include: (1) Resonance sounds, (2) Cooing sounds, (3) Babbling sounds, (4) Repetitive babbling sounds, (5) Vocable sounds (Chaer, 2003, p. 233).
- b) Early Lingual Period (ages 1-2.5 years) In this period, children start uttering their first words, although not yet perfectly, such as "atit" (sakit/pain) or "agi" (lagi/more). Certain letter combinations and specific sounds like r, s, k, j, and t are still difficult to pronounce. Language proficiency increases rapidly and can be divided into three stages: (a) One-word sentence stage (holophrase), (b) Two-word sentence stage, (c) More-than-two-word sentence stage (more word sentence) (Mar'at, 2005, p. 62).
- c) Differentiation Period (ages 2.5-5 years) During this period, children's skills in distinguishing the use of words and sentences become very pronounced.
- d) School-Ready Period (after age 5) According to Chaer, this period occurs when children are about to enter primary school, at the age of five to six years. Kindergarten or playgroup education is not considered formal schooling since it is primarily for preparing children to enter basic education (Chaer, 2003, p. 237).

## **Types of Child Language Development**

Child language development is a skill used for communicating with others (Taufiqurrahman and Suyadi, 2019, p. 160). Yusuf (2012) classifies child language development into two main types:

## 1. Egocentric Speech

- The child speaks to themselves, or monologues.
- $\circ~$  Its function is to develop the child's thinking ability.
- It usually occurs in children aged 2-3 years.
- 2. Socialized Speech
  - Occurs when the child interacts with friends or their environment.
  - Language development in this type is divided into five forms:
    - Adapted Information: Exchange of ideas or seeking a common goal.
    - Criticism: The child's assessment of the speech or behavior of others.
    - Command, Request, and Threat: Commands, requests, and threats.
    - Questions: Asking questions.
    - Answers: Providing answers.

• The function of socialized speech is to develop the child's social adjustment skills.

# Factors Influencing Child Language Development

Good knowledge allows parents to receive information about childcare, health, and children's education, and to be more responsive and capable of determining the best alternatives when facing problems (Suhardjo, 2007). Genetic factors are among those that influence child language development (Nasution et al., 2023, p. 407; Sumaryanti, 2017, p. 74). Child language development is influenced by both external and internal factors. Internal factors include perception, cognition, and prematurity, while external factors include knowledge, parenting styles, and socioeconomic status (Safitri, 2017, p. 152). Baiti (2020, p. 42) adds that parental communication and parenting can take the form of guiding, nurturing, training, and providing examples.

According to Yusuf, several factors influence child language development:

1. Health

Health significantly affects language development. If a child's health is frequently compromised in the first two years, language development may be delayed.

2. Intelligence

Intelligence affects language development. Children with normal or higher intelligence usually experience faster language development, while children with mental delays tend to have language limitations.

3. Family Socioeconomic Status

Research shows that children from poor families often experience language development delays compared to children from wealthier families. This is due to differences in intelligence or learning opportunities.

4. Gender

From the age of two onwards, girls tend to have faster language development than boys.

5. Family Relationships

Children who have healthy relationships with their families (full of care and affection) typically experience good language development. Conversely, unhealthy relationships can lead to stagnation or abnormalities in language development, such as stuttering, unclear speech, rudeness, impoliteness, and fear of expressing opinions.

# CONCLUSION

Understanding developmental psychology provides deep insights into the concept of education. This understanding has a significant impact on the field of curriculum, as the learning material and processes must be adapted to the child's development, particularly in terms of communication and language. Developmental psychology, which includes aspects of affection and cognition, provides educators with guidance on how to prepare and organize educational material. It also includes how to guide and motivate students so that they are willing to learn voluntarily, based on their awareness and readiness. Educators need to pay attention to both affective and cognitive readiness (verbal) so that the material being taught can be well understood and applied. Affective readiness should be developed through motivational models, while cognitive readiness can be understood from the stages of the child's cognitive development.

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