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Cognitive Language and Development

Mrs. Bassingthwaite

Final Essay

Throughout this course, I have learned a great deal about the development of a child in both the cognitive and language aspects. This knowledge is a critical piece of information to have, especially when one plans on entering into the profession of teaching children.

There were five main concepts from this course that stood out to me, in ways that are both interesting and helpful. These concepts are an important part in the field of cognitive and language development, and I will discuss how these concepts impact myself as a professional, as well as how they impact the children who learn from them.

The first concept that stood out to me was the concept of building foundations for spatial literacy in early childhood. This interested me because this concept discussed how young children’s ability to write correctly and how they draw pictures are connected. The book expands more on the importance of spatial understanding by stating that children become increasingly adept at aligning objects, and that children also become better at understanding how the individual part comes together to create a whole (Copple, 2012). Children first have to find an anchor in space, and this usually first begins with their own body. The ability for children to identify this lays the groundwork for them to write effectively. The ability for a child to write and draw both goes through various levels of progress. The first level, the pre-axial level, is when a child can represent objects and understand location, but they do not coordinate with a reference point. Both pictures and words created at this level seem to be floating in space. The next level of development is when the child progresses to the uni-axial level. This shift usually occurs by age 6, and both drawings and words are arranged along a single line (Copple, 2012). Although these drawings are more organized than that of the pre-axial level, the frame of reference that the child uses is still simple and one dimensional. The bi-axial level is next, and this is when children start to think more about complex spatial relations. This continues until the child reaches the last level, which is the integrated bi-axial level. With this level, the child is capable of integrating two or more reference lines in his or her drawings.

The implications for teaching when it comes to this concept are important ones. In math, social studies, and art, spatial literacy and spatial awareness are critical. Helping to lay the foundational groundwork for the development of spatial literacy can also help children in the future, where jobs such as engineers to carpenters rely on spatial literacy for the completion of their job. It is also important for the student’s cognitive development in things such as walking and how they move. Although it may seem like this may have nothing to do with it, spatial awareness plays a major role in the early development of any child.

The second concept that interested me was the theorists that were presented near the beginning of our class text; in particular, Jean Piaget. He laid out stages of development for children and was an influential theorist in the field of cognitive and language development. While other theorists have their own theories about how children develop, Piaget believed that a child acquires knowledge by interacting with the world. He laid out stages of development and described the intellectual capacities of children at theses stages.

The stages are the sensorimotor period, the preoperational period, the concrete operational period, and then the formal operational period. The sensorimotor period is from 0-2 years, and during this period, thoughts are determined by sensory exploration as a baby hears, sees, tastes, and feels. The second period, the preoperational period, occurs from the ages of 2-7. In this period, a child’s language develops, their thinking is concrete, and the child begins to organize his or her own world. The third period is the concrete operational period, which is from the ages of 7-11. During this period, the child begins his or her thought process in the concrete, and is eventually able to move into some abstract ideas. The fourth and final period of Piaget’s developmental periods is the formal operational period. This period occurs from the ages of 11-adulthood. This period consists of high level thinking and it involves using language to deal with abstract thought. All of these periods of development are important to have when the child is developing. Two important terms to remember regarding Piaget are assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation means that a child incorporates new information into the information that he or she may already know. Accommodation is similar to assimilation, but it requires the child to actually change his or her schemes to accommodate new information.

This is extremely important to understand when it comes to the field of education. By being aware of what period a child is in, one can begin to understand what type of development he or she may be going through. It also helps to know this information when you are teaching younger children new knowledge and information. Whether he or she will use assimilation or accommodation could help direct in what ways you are going to best get the information across.

The third concept that stood out to me is the stages of the language development itself. This interests me because it is amazing how much has to go into the successful development of language in young children. There are six stages that are mention in the text (Morrow, 2012). The first stage is from birth to 1 year of age. During this stage of development, infants play with and experiment with sounds. When the baby gets to be between the ages of 8 to 10 months, the babbling becomes more sophisticated (Morrow, 2012). Near the end of this stage, the comprehension of language increases dramatically, and the child is speaking their first meaningful words. The next developmental stage occurs between the ages of 1 and 2, and during this stage, a child’s oral language grows a lot. By the time the child is 18 months old, most children can pronounce four-fifths of the English phonemes and use 9 to 20 words (Bloom, 1990). When the child is between the ages of 2 to 3, the most dramatic growth in language development occurs. The child’s vocabulary can grow from 300 to 1,000 words, and they are actively playing with language.

During ages 3 to 4, the child’s knowledge of sentence structure continues to develop rapidly, and as they approach the age of 4, children have acquired almost all of the elements of adult language (Morrow, 2012). Ages 5 to 6 brings with it a complex vocabulary and they become aware of the fact that some words have more than one meaning. From ages 7 to 8, the child has developed a grammar that is almost equivalent to that of an adult’s. The language development in children as young as 3 can help predict his or her success in reading in the eleventh grade (Morrow, 2012).

These stages are important to be aware of, especially in the classrooms that have younger children in them, such as kindergarten and first grade. Being aware of these stages of language development can help the teacher and other professionals to look for signs of slow development in children, and can offer the early intervention that may be critical to the child’s success.

The fourth concept that I am choosing to focus on is a concept that is more hands on, and allows for the children to explore reading and language in a fun environment. Literacy centers are a focal point in any classroom, providing a place to read, write, or even illustrate pictures in books. The layout of the center itself is a critical piece in order for it to be effective. There should be colored rugs and beanbags for the students to sit on while reading and it should be a fun and opening environment for readers at every level. The text emphasizes the importance of privacy in a literacy center, and it does so to make sure that student’s feel like they have privacy when utilizing this space (Morrow, 2012). Literacy centers can also have an “Author’s Spot” in it. This place would consist of a table and chairs, paper, scissors, markers and crayons, and several computers for students to create their own pieces of literature.

The literacy center is a place where students are able to read and create their own stories in privacy. The importance of this concept for me as a teacher is very high because it will most likely be something that I use every day with my students. There should not be a literacy center that doesn’t have that certain feel to it, a feeling of warmth and engagement. It introduces students to reading and even to creating their own stories at a young age, and makes it fun for them as well. It is important that I create a place that is inviting and offers all of my students an opportunity to engage in reading and in the further development of their ever-growing language.

The fifth and final concept that stood out to me was the comprehension strategies that are utilized when reading books. These are important because a student can read all of the books that he or she may want, but if they do not comprehend what they are reading, it offers little growth for the student. The text offered several strategies to ensure that comprehension of text is achieved and that students are engaged and a part of the discussion. Some key terms that are mentioned in this part of the book are the steps that can be used for guided teaching of comprehension strategies.

The first step is explanation. In this step, the teacher explains what the strategy is, why it is important, and when it is used. Modeling occurs next. During this step, the teacher demonstrates how the strategy is used by using it with the students. The third step is guided practice. With this step, an opportunity is provided for the students to practice using the strategy. This is a good time for the teacher to take a little step back and allow the students to seek help from one another (Morrow, 2012). Independent application is the next step, followed by reflection. Independent application is when the teacher allows for the students to practice the comprehension strategies without guidance, and then the child reflects on the strategy during the reflection step (Morrow, 2012).

These comprehension strategies are essential for the comprehension of text by the student. In my classroom, and I would think in almost any classroom, emphasis needs to be placed on the comprehension of the text itself. As I stated before, students can read books, but if they do not comprehend the text and the meaning of the text, there is no growth in their knowledge. I have worked with individuals who have very little trouble reading the text itself, but when it comes to what the text means and questions about the text that they just read, they are at a loss. Teaching the students these strategies lets them understand how to comprehend text in all areas of their life. By teaching them this, you are helping to set them up for success in the years to come.

These five concepts are just the surface of the strategies and steps that are provided in the texts used for this class. By being aware of the concepts that are presented, both beginning and veteran teachers alike can benefit from the information that it provides them.

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